BAUDELAIRE

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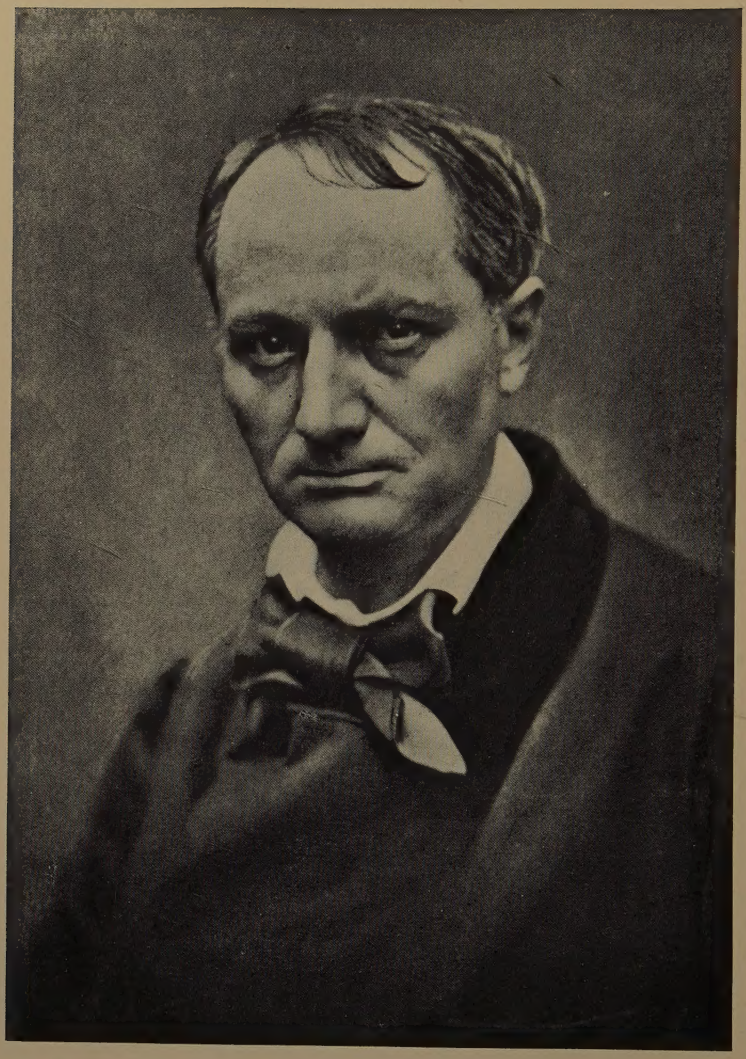
May, 1930

BAUDELAIRE



BAUDELAIRE AT FORTY

The Carjat Photograph

BAUDELAIRE

Flesh and Spirit

BY

LEWIS PIAGET SHANKS

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ILLUSTRATED

LITTLE · BROWN · AND
COMPANY · BOSTON · 1930

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Published April, 1930

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

American readers usually happen upon Baudelaire in college years, at some moment when boredom and penury send them to the library, to seek in books instead of in life the Fruit of the Tree. Nibbled at surreptitiously without an adequate knowledge of French, "Les Fleurs du mal" has for Anglo-Saxon boys a strange and sinister savor; they picture the poet as a romantic Ajax defying morals and convention in verses unexceptionally saturnine and orgiastic. This fond illusion may remain even in mature students of literature: when my translation of Baudelaire's "Complete Poems" appeared in 1926, an ex-academic critic betrayed his ignorance of French by criticizing for its sentiment a version whose chief fault was its fidelity to the original.

But if we read with a dictionary all of Baudelaire, including the letters, he appears as he was, a sensitive and sentimental poet despite his struggle to hide his sentimentality beneath a mask. A *poète maudit* as Verlaine calls him, he was unfitted for the business of living by a mother who spoiled him and filled him with her fears of life — fears increased by the sinister quarter in which he lived no less than by the precepts of a Jansenistic religious training. At seven he found himself thrust out of an infantile paradise of love by his mother's second marriage, and put upon the defensive for all his days by the uncompro-

Poe. Incessantly craving affection, craving a calm and understanding love which might cushion him against life's shocks, he lived most of his days in a desert barren of all tenderness save his mother's, which returned to him in his last ten years during her second widowhood. He lived or rather existed for twenty years in dirty lodging houses whose sordidness he could only escape in dreams induced by drugs. He lived waiting in vain for the glory which would have restored his ego so early blighted, and which could only react by hurting others in his turn. He lived and died a failure, yet conscious that his fame would live.

His work has lived. Of all the books of verse of the last century, it is "Les Fleurs du mal" which is the most alive to-day. From it more than from any other book contemporary poetry descends, not only in France but in England and America. Before Wagner, whom he first revealed to Paris by his passionate defense, Baudelaire advanced immeasurably the frontiers of poetry, and like Wagner he created a new art in his symbolism, the influence of which is still continuing. "If there are among our poets", says Monsieur Paul Valéry, "any who are greater and more highly gifted than Baudelaire, there are none more important." So we must study the poet's life together with his work, instead of considering him merely a *poète maudit* or as a Flower of Evil.

LEWIS PIAGET SHANKS

December 19, 1929

CONTENTS

	PREFACE	v
I ·	A PARADISE LOST	3
II ·	THE ACRID MILK OF LEARNING	19
III ·	THE DANDY	35
IV ·	THE SUCCUBA	52
V ·	THE DISCOVERY OF ART	68
VI ·	TEMPEST AND DAWN	86
VII ·	ABSOLVED BY ISRAFEL	104
VIII ·	LES FLEURS DU MAL	122
IX ·	A SERAPH TURNS FLESH	139
X ·	DISILLUSION AND LETHE	157
XI ·	RED DAWN AT FORTY	180
XII ·	SWAN SONG	206
XIII ·	FLESH TO SPIRIT	231
	INDEX	257

ILLUSTRATIONS

BAUDELAIRE AT FORTY	*Frontispiece*
BAUDELAIRE AT TWENTY-THREE	36
THE HOTEL PIMODAN	38
JEANNE DUVAL *circa* 1850	66
MADAME SABATIER	144
DRAWING BY BAUDELAIRE (J. G. F.?)	182
THE DEATH-MASK	232
THE MONUMENT BY CHARMOY	254

BAUDELAIRE

"Common sense tells us that the things of this earth have but little substantiality, and that true reality is only found in dreams." Baudelaire reveals his character in that sentence, written at the age of thirty-nine, and in another which follows it in the Dedication of the "Paradis artificiels": "Woman is the being that projects the deepest shadows or the brightest light in our dreams."

Naturally his mother colored his first vision of life. In the "Lettres intimes" he drops the devil mask and bares his neurotic timidity to the woman who gave it to him. Without these letters we could not find her in his verses, because he abhorred "the prostitution of family intimacies." Still less could we discover the spell that she cast over his lonely childhood:

> I am a room where faded roses lie
> And gowns of perished fashions multiply,
> With none but ladies in pastel to share
> The fragrance of a phial forgotten there . . .

He loved her "with a passionate love" at the age when he first explored this forbidden storeroom, with its old bridal bouquets and heaps of outworn finery. When he was forty he told her so, recalling in a letter their ride back from the hospital where she had been sent, and the drawings she had given him in

the cab to prove that she thought of the child left at home with his nurse. He never forgot their "endless effusions", their walks together through the narrow streets of Old Paris; until, as he recalls in a sonnet, the sun had set beneath the bridges and they turned homeward along the misty river. He remembered how desolate the quays were at nightfall, when the winter twilight crept through the narrow Rue Hautefeuille — a street which is still one of the most sordid and sinister in Old Paris, despite the boulevards which have opened up the vast dark labyrinth then extending from the river to the Gardens of the Luxembourg. When the door of Number Thirteen was shut upon the blackness which took horrible shapes beyond the smoky oil lamps of the streets, the child was caught up by his mother for his good-night kiss and half-smothered in her soft and fragrant fur mantle. These moments he remembered especially. He loved his mother "because of her elegance", he notes in his diary; he loved and feared her for her capricious humors; she was a woman, and in her fragrance his soul and his senses found the spell of woman.

She was not to blame for spoiling him, because she too was starved for love. Caroline Archimbaut-Dufays, born in London in 1793, was still a baby when she had lost her father, a former French officer exiled like the *émigrés* because of blood or sympathies or possibly some indiscretion. Her mother had not long survived him; so the penniless Caroline had been brought up by friends at Paris, and had just escaped their charity by marrying an old friend of her

foster father — a man thirty-four years her senior. Highly strung and long repressed, she could do no less than lavish her heart upon the son who was born in her twenty-eighth year, the ninth of April, 1821.

She taught him English as a baby; she naturally dinned into his ears the notions of "respectability" which she had absorbed in England as a child; she gave him his conception of Sin. From her or from her confessor he probably got his belief in a personal devil and the idea of retributive disaster which runs through his work and his letters: she alone could have told him the legends of her fallen family tree which made him set down in his diary: "My ancestors, idiots or maniacs, in solemn palace halls, all victims of their terrible passions." The letters hint that there was at least a germ of truth in this; and like many another child a hundred years ago, he shuddered at the example set before him as a warning.

Just before the boy was six years old his father, François Baudelaire, died, at the age of sixty-seven. That distinguished old gentleman, with his white hair and jet-black eyebrows and old-fashioned garb and manners, might have seemed to have stepped out of the portrait hung in the drawing-room, and then smilingly returned to it, like the ghost from the eighteenth century that he was. Little Charles would never again listen to his reminiscences: his childhood in Champagne, where he was born in 1759 to parents who were evidently farmers; the seminary for priests where he had been educated; his decade of luxury in Paris before the Revolution, when he had lived in a

Duke's family as preceptor,—almost as an equal, since he was lodged in apartments of his own where he entertained at dinner his friends and even his patrons. His friendships with Condorcet and Helvétius and Cabanis, the Revolution in which he had "worn the red cap" but none the less shared with his former benefactors, now fallen, the pittance he earned as a drawing master, his long years of government service at the Palace of the Senate—all these memories of a family history filled with elegance and heroism were lost. Only their echoes did he hear from his mother—his father's second wife—or from his half brother, Claude-Alphonse, the future magistrate, sixteen years older than he, who was usually absent and who was to marry and set up his own home within two years, in 1829.

François Baudelaire's second marriage at sixty betrays a temperament which lived again in the son of his old age, but to the boy the elderly gallant with his patriarchal air must have seemed almost a god. In after years the poet always kept his portrait before him; and at the end of his life, as no doubt in childhood, he used to pray to him as an intercessor. From his old-fashioned suavity, his irony and detachment he derived a sophisticated ideal opposed to the emotionality of his neurasthenic mother—an ideal of self-repression and formality, which years later made his fellow Romanticists ridicule his elaborate manner as a pose. But Baudelaire's courtesy was not always ironical, and came from a father who had lived more than forty years of his life in the eighteenth century.

François Baudelaire was from his youth devoted to the fine arts, and when he retired at fifty-six, in 1815, he was rich enough to carry out his life's ambition of becoming an artist. The word "*peintre*" follows his signature on his son's baptismal certificate; his closest friends were artists, for the birth record is signed by Naigeon the painter and Ramey the sculptor, and he also knew the great painter Prud'hon. His own amateur work was "detestable" to his son's more cultivated taste, but Baudelaire got from his father and from his father's engravings much that fanned his passion for art: later he often spoke of the days when the old man first led him by the hand to the Palace of the Luxembourg and explained to him the statues there. That initiation into the world of plastic beauty he was never to forget.

No doubt, too, that he could also remember sitting breathless beside his father's easel, or stealing into the parlor adorned with the pictures of undraped nymphs which the old lover of Fragonard's fancy preferred to paint; because in his diaries the poet twice mentions this infatuation: "Pictures, my only, my greatest and my earliest passion."

But when Baudelaire was six these were only memories of an indulgent old man who had "gone to Heaven." Left alone with his mother and nurse the child soon found that the whole household revolved about him. For a space at least his mother's love was exclusively his, and with the pure sensuousness of a child he revelled in it. "Those were my good days, the days of motherly tenderness," he confesses in a

retrospective letter. "I was still living within you; you were both my idol and my comrade." They had a summer together at Neuilly near Paris—an idyllic summer:

> I've not forgotten, where the pavements cease,
> Our villa white, a tiny nook of peace,
> The plaster Venus and Pomona old
> Hiding in leafless hedge their limbs a-cold,
> And every eve the sun, proud sovereign,
> That burst in streaming sheaves against the pane,
> As if the heavens viewed with curious eye
> Our long and silent suppers, and the sky
> Lit all its altar-candles on the verge
> Of our white cloth, and windows hung with serge.

When they returned to Paris they gave up the stately apartment in the Rue Hautefeuille, with "its old Louis Seize furniture, Napoleonic antiques and paintings and pastels", in the old seventeenth-century house which the construction of the Boulevard Saint-Germain was soon to sweep away. Madame Baudelaire removed to another house in the same depressing quarter, in the Place Saint-André-des-Arts, and then again to the Rue du Bac. Thus the rooms to which the aged friends of the dead "artist" had brought the spirit of the eighteenth century became a memory. Pastels and water colors were packed away or sold; years later Baudelaire found in the shop of a second-hand dealer an aquarelle of his father's, picturing three naked nymphs. His conscientious mother never forgot the puritanical land of her birth.

Madame Baudelaire was a conventional Catholic

who had long found in religion a motive for her enforced resignation. Hence she naturally took her son to the masses said for his dead father, first bidding the child to put away the lead soldiers that he loved to play with, like every young Gaul then and since.

Later she took him to plays, but not very often, probably, because her character and their circumstances forbade too many such indulgences. Thus she gave him a lifelong love of the theater, for these rare occasions became like magic casements opening upon the Ideal.

In after years he put in a prose-poem his first childhood impressions of the drama:

"In vast melancholy palaces, shown against a background of sea and sky, men and women, grave and melancholy too, but far fairer and more richly clad than those we see everywhere, speak with chanting voices. . . . The women are much taller and more beautiful than those who come to see us at home, and though with their great deep eyes and flaming cheeks they fill you with terror, you cannot keep from loving them. You are afraid, you feel like weeping, and yet you are happy. Then too — this is stranger yet — they make you want to be dressed as they are, to say and to do the same things, and to speak with the same voices. . . ."

The boy also enjoyed, as he was always to enjoy, the color and tinsel and lyric grace of the acrobats in the annual Neuilly Fair; he saw the Punch-and-Judy plays in the parks; he went to pantomimes in which the curtain fell upon a silver-winged angel

standing over the fallen ugly bulk of the demon, while the stage shone with light triumphant. He saw the gaily uniformed bodyguards of Charles X marching through the streets, the blazing croziers and golden vestments of the clergy at Notre Dame. And as every child must have a goal, he dreamed of a future that might bring him at last all the things that he lacked as a child living among adults—a timid child, who even then looked out at life with "dread and ecstasy."

He wanted to be a military pope like Hildebrand, or a famous actor; hour after hour he played that he was one or the other, and "drew vast delights from these hallucinations." In the church heavy with incense, he found again the spell of femininity that filled his mother's silks and furs; the priest, to him, ruled over a realm of miracles.

To be a priest, or better still a medieval pope, would have satisfied his childish longings. He saw himself glorious in splendid robes, a being neither man nor woman but above either, a dispenser of the divine, venerated like the Abbé who confessed his mother and prepared him for his first communion. He pored over the "Lives of the Saints", and like them he had his "conversations with God." All these things were to come back to him after the rebellion of his youth at last subsided, filling his conscience with the remorse that overflows in his later verses and letters to his mother. He could defile but not blot out that vision of a life above life, born when soul and senses still bear no tarnish of experience.

There were reasons for the spell he found in the mysteries of the Church. Lonely and insignificant, without comrades of his own age and virtually imprisoned in a city apartment, he built for himself a mimic stage of dreams; and it was natural that he should make it reflect the chief interest of his mother and of the nurse whom a lifetime of service had made one of the family. His mother was jealous of this "great-hearted" nurse who tended him so faithfully, we learn from one poem; but if he loved Mariette he truly idolized his dainty mother, fragrant, silken and remote from the few duties he was required to perform. Such was Baudelaire's world when he was seven.

It was an isolated life in a world of women, with his father's portrait to keep alive a beloved memory, and his father's books to show him that books can replace friends, and to make him until the end of his life a man who never gave himself completely in any friendship. In "La voix" he tells us that his cradle stood beside the bookcase, and in that "dark tower of Babel" he found a dream life filled with heroes of fiction and a plastic world of the senses.

This library was made up mostly of eighteenth-century works and contained no children's books: Baudelaire states expressly that everything he read was written for adults. There were the works of Voltaire, Molière, Rabelais, Plutarch in translation, La Bruyère, Montesquieu, the "Encyclopédie", the "Contrat social" and the works of Lavater. To this rough list of his father's library should be added a

few English books belonging to his mother — a "Paradise Lost", certainly, and probably a copy of Lewis' horrific novel "The Monk", which Baudelaire states that he read in childhood. If we read "La voix" aright there were books of travels; there was surely an atlas, in those days when he "suffered from cravings for all that he did not possess, and lived at the ends of the world":

> For children, who in charts and books delight
> The earth is equal to their hungry gaze.
> How huge the world beneath the lamp at night! . . .

In the inventory we find at least one other book that expressed the artistic and libertine tastes of his father: the "Antiquités d'Herculanum", and remembering his mother's attitude toward art we may be sure that her prudery had set it apart from the others. It was forbidden fruit because of the many "nudes" among the illustrations; and it must have stood with the topmost row. The retrospective melancholy which Baudelaire later found in erotic prints would be explained by such a "reserved shelf", first ransacked, together with all his dead father's portfolios of engravings, when the newly made widow was forced to remain for some time at the hospital — a reserved shelf which he could consult at will when Mariette was absent and his mother was occupied with visitors.

Those who came to see the old man's widow were doubtless not numerous. Yet there was one who appeared rather often — a soldier in a showy uni-

form, a man still in his thirties and very good-looking. People said that Major Aupick was destined to have a brilliant future in the army, where he had risen rapidly through his courage during the Napoleonic wars. Madame Baudelaire had been a widow long enough to feel her poverty and her need of protection; but she waited twenty months before marrying the soldier in November, 1828; twenty months made a conventional widowhood.

Merope mortalem nupsit: by her remarriage Baudelaire's divinity became a mortal. She was no longer his exclusively; and though he still had Mariette and was not yet sent away to school, his self-centered life of affections and books and pictures was blighted by the presence of a stranger who took his mother from him, and whom he had to call "mon ami." He was forced to submit, but when she told him his clear brown eye became the distrustful eye of all his portraits. The gate now closed upon his infancy and the "green Eden of his childish loves." He had lost "the sweetness of the fireside" which he had enjoyed when he was seven, and never again was he to believe in a woman. Conflicts came, repressions had to be learned; he had to forge himself a brazen cuirass of egotism; year by year the timid dreamy boy hardened into the youth who said: "one doesn't marry again when one has a son like me."

Admittedly no one could have replaced François Baudelaire, who had the *bonhomie* of La Fontaine and the age and indulgence of a grandfather. Major Aupick was his exact opposite; he was an officer

who had risen from the ranks through his campaigns, and he possessed all the traits of character which such a series of promotions implies. "Yet I did love him", wrote the poet to his mother long afterward, when she was again a widow: "and moreover I have to-day enough wisdom to be just to him. But he was doggedly unskillful, after all."

Major Aupick was a brave, honest soldier and had no lack of good intentions. But he erred in thinking that he could bring up a sensitive dreamer by the discipline he had himself undergone and train him to obey like a recruit at the tap of a drum. He blundered as nearly every one in such a situation will do. No stepfather will consent to yield the first place in his wife's affections to another man's son, and no martinet will allow his rights to be forgotten. Aupick expected a spoiled child to act like a man, and took up a course of action which finally made his wife afraid to show her maternal love. Irresolute and yielding as she was, Madame Aupick might be considered as unfortunate as the child who had to suffer a second weaning, but she needed no pity; she was in love, and blind as any widow who first finds a real mate at thirty-five.

When the family removed to Lyons, where the Major had been sent after he returned from the Algerian campaign of 1830, she allowed him to put the eleven-year-old boy into a boarding school, which eliminated him from the household except on holidays.

The removal to Lyons was itself a misfortune.

Those who have not spent a dreary winter in that city draped with fog can get an idea of its gloom from Daudet's "Le petit Chose." Lyons with its continuous pall of fog or clouds, its unending rains, its dirt, its sordid slums filled with damp basement-workshops and sodden toilers — poor slaves, who had revolted in bread riots the year before; Lyons with its mysticism which alone offered escape in dreams from the evils of life, the city of processions and retreats, the city of the *Illuminés* and of the mystic Ballanche: — Lyons with its slums and its consoling mysticism gave Baudelaire the background for his first solitude and his first meditations upon existence.

At night in the dormitories, he thought of Paris and the past. He thought of his mother and of Mariette the "great-hearted" nurse. Mariette was dead now. She had probably died in the house, and he could still hear in memory the stertorous breathing of her agony, the death rattle which he mentions in the sonnet "Obsession." He knew what death and decomposition were — knew the horror that a child first feels when he comes upon the decaying body of some animal, for the vividness of the poem "Une charogne" proves the early date of that encounter. Then, thinking of Mariette, he thought of all "the piteous dead":

> Old frozen skeletons that grave-worms gnaw,
> Who feel the snows that fall and slowly thaw
> Through all eternity, while no friend comes,
> Nor kin, to change the wreaths upon their tombs . . .

And he thought, too, of his father in his far-off grave, where they changed the wreaths so seldom. . . . The germ-spores of a hideous curiosity dropped into his mind, ready to spread like mold in his adolescent imagination, among the emblems of death loved by the poets of the eighteen-thirties.

Nor were the boy's days less depressing than his nights, in that municipal school ruled by military discipline and filled with all the horrors of absolute promiscuity. It was not in such a hell that a sensitive boy could develop social feeling. "You know what an atrocious education your husband determined to give me" — runs the intimate letter to his mother: "I am forty years old and I cannot yet think without pain of boarding schools, nor of the fear that my stepfather inspired in me." Baudelaire put this fear into his vitriolic poem "Bénédiction." At school he got on no better than he did at home, since the diary testifies: "After 1830, the Collège de Lyon, blows, battles with my teachers and my fellow students, fits of crushing melancholy."

His timidity thus increased his egoistic pride. The self-centered boy is hateful and inspires hatred, and the hatred of a multitude becomes a force which rouses into flame the compensatory egoism in the victim's heart. So there is pathos in another note from the diary: "A feeling of loneliness, even from my childhood. In spite of my family, and in the midst of my comrades especially, — a consciousness of a destiny everlastingly lonely. And yet, a very keen desire for life and for pleasure."

The last words of the note reveal the son of the dead epicurean. Even at Lyons Baudelaire acted in little comedies at school; he loved to dance and "never missed a single waltz" at a ball; he had ambition, for he swore in his letters that a friend of his should not win prizes and he none, *ventre-saint-gris!* He enjoyed holidays here, Thursdays spent in the country, as we can see by the confession-story "La Fanfarlo." There were sunny hours at some near-by farm, and the wild joys of sliding down from huge haystacks. There were girls to play with, charming girls like the heroines of Musset's poems, which he read in his early 'teens, "when one loves for love's sake alone." He remembered games of hide-and-seek prolonged until the moon rose, on "beautiful evenings when young souls wax like trees after being struck by lightning." He remembered twilights filled with music, sudden strains of waltzes floating through open French windows, with the fragrance scattered by a coming storm. These memories were to be transfigured in "Harmonie du soir."

At Lyons too the hero of "La Fanfarlo" found one girl who did not fear the first heavy drops of the shower, "in the shrubbery which caught her fleeing skirts, where brown hair and golden curls mingled in the whirlwind of pursuit." He mentions her regretfully in a fragment of verse written at Paris a year or two later. Lyons gave this love to his seraglio of memories, and he celebrated it in the poem "Mœsta et errabunda", whose music sinks so swiftly from the thunder of the surge to the far echo of a dying wave:

Say, Agatha, in dreams dost thou delight
— Far from the city's black and filthy sea —
To rove where other oceans burst in light,
Blue, deep, and crystal-clear as chastity?
Say, Agatha, dost thou in dreams delight?

The vast vast ocean is our comforter!
What demon gave the hoarse resounding sea
— And the harsh winds' huge organ made for her —
That siren voice to soothe our misery?
The vast vast ocean is our comforter!

. . . Bear me away, swift car and frigate white! . . .

But the green Eden of our earliest loves,
Songs, roses, races, with a kiss to win,
The jugs of wine at dusk in shadowy groves
Where died, afar, a quivering violin,
— But the green Eden of our earliest loves,

Our Eden of pure tremulous joy and bliss,
Is it now farther than the Asian shore?
Can tears or cries recall each magic kiss,
Or prayers or silvery words some eve restore
Our Eden of pure tremulous joy and bliss?

II · THE ACRID MILK OF LEARNING

The stay at Lyons lasted from Baudelaire's eleventh year through his fifteenth, and its influence was decisive. Baudelaire divined modern thinkers in perceiving that the patterns of our lives are fixed during childhood and adolescence. "It is then that things leave a deep imprint upon the tender and responsive mind", he says in his essay on Poe: "it is then that colors are vivid, and the senses vocal with a mysterious tongue. The character, genius and style of a man are formed by the apparently trivial circumstances of his first youth."

For any child who does not early learn to recognize his place in the macrocosm must suffer from every contact with fact. The tiny world of oneness in which he lives the first few months, when all his needs are satisfied and no desire is punished, that world without walls dividing the self and the non-self — since a mother is then only a soft background for his greedy little ego — must give way to a world of others, in which he is but a part and where his claims are not paramount. With Baudelaire the infant stage lasted too long and was too rudely destroyed; the child was forced back upon himself and made more egotistic by his sense of injustice. When at Lyons he lost even his diminished place in the family and was exiled to a boarding school, the

disaster was complete: a hostile universe had put him upon the defensive for life.

He detested the huge manufacturing town of his exile; that "city of store-counters" first prompted his lifelong hatred of trade and merchants. He hated his classes and the only prize he won here was in drawing — a success due not to application but to a talent inherited from both father and mother. Born a Parisian and an intellectual, he disliked most of his provincial fellow students, which was hardly to be wondered at considering the "blows" he received from them. They called him "cynical" or "mystical"; he was "a queer fellow" who liked to recite Hugo's verses or Lamartine's. A schoolboy letter from Lyons signed Carlos — the name of the king in "Hernani" — shows how he admired Hugo's epoch-making drama, whose hero was, like him, an exile, and like him at war with the world.

So Baudelaire must have rejoiced when in 1836 the family returned to Paris, where Major Aupick — now Colonel Aupick — had been appointed to the General Staff. The soldier then placed his stepson as a boarding pupil in the Collège Louis-le-Grand, presenting him to the authorities as "a student who would do honor to the school." This confidence the young man justified by making a good record and even by winning prizes, despite the rhymes he used to scribble during classes. He was still exiled from the family hearth except on holidays, but the Colonel was generous, and during one summer vacation took him for a trip through the Pyrenees. The journey

inspired a descriptive poem on the mountains, which in two stanzas reveals the future master with all his vigor, mystic profundity and nervous sharpness of imagery. "The silence that makes one wish to flee" is a line that recalls the ending of Poe's prose-poem "Silence." Already Baudelaire betrays his kinship with the brother-in-spirit whom he did not know.

To remember the Pyrenees and their vast dreadful silences must have increased his horror of the study hall, where he composed Latin verses as he squirmed on the hard oak bench of his prison. Baudelaire's "Stances à Sainte-Beuve" gives us a picture of his cloistered school life, spent gazing through dusty panes at the leaden skies of Lyons or Paris, "with ear pricked to catch the noise of a falling book or the shouts of an insurrection outside." There had been bread riots in Lyons before and after his step-father had been sent there — riots provoked by utter destitution; Baudelaire knew the horrors of Lyons slums no less than those of the capital.

Those gloomy backgrounds set in relief the books which made him forget them — the books of the Romanticists. In his provincial exile, when he had made his first communion and thrilled with mystic ecstasy over the verses of Lamartine and Victor Hugo, he had learned in the dramas of Alfred de Musset the delights of cynicism, and tasted the crude joy of soiling the ideal with blasphemies, like the reckless heroes Rolla, Mardoche and Hassan. He had probably read Gautier's "Albertus" soon after

its appearance in 1832, and shivered deliciously over its macabre realism of the tomb. At fifteen he had devoured "René", and like all the Romantic poets found himself again in that mirror of disillusion and moral solitude. Then he discovered Sainte-Beuve's morose verses, which project upon the landscape of Paris the gloom of their author: here indeed was a vision of life like his own — the vision of one who, prisoned in self by his defenses, found the world a dissecting hall.

But if Sainte-Beuve showed him the way, it was the narrow streets of Old Paris, explored and loved since childhood, that made him a poet — that made him preëminently the poet of Paris. He could not help loving these dark but picturesque alleys which had sheltered the awakening of a spirit forced to find its joys in sadness. Miracles had happened to him in that sinister capital described by Balzac and Eugène Sue. Long before Whistler and his followers he had seen Night trail her murk over its crooked streets and give them the somber beauty of a Romantic lithograph — the beauty he puts into one of his earliest poems, "Le crépuscule du soir":

> Night falls, so welcome to the criminal.
> Creeping it comes, like an accomplice : all
> The heavens slowly close their portals gray,
> And restless man becomes a beast of prey. . . .

It is a drawing filled with sinister shadows, for besides the tired workmen and the eager pleasure-seekers he depicts the gamblers, the street-walkers and the thieves; then, significantly, his pity goes out

to the paupers dying in the workhouse — homeless like himself.

Somber miracles took place within him as he walked the streets of Paris, especially in the labyrinth of ancient buildings pierced by the narrow street where he had been born. Within a stone's throw of his first home were alleys and dramshops which might have served as stage setting for the gruesome poem "Le vin de l'assassin", and quays drowned in yellow fog such as he was to put into "Les sept vieillards." But he was not yet prepared to sing these wonders; the verse that came to him dreaming in class-time was still too sentimental. He was bored in school and found in reading his sole recreation there. One day he discovered Sainte-Beuve's morbid love-story "Volupté", which mingles sensuousness and mysticism and Jesuitical casuistry in a brew far more insidious than "René."

Every imaginative youth can recall one book that seemed written solely for him. From the pages of "Volupté" Baudelaire, according to his own confession, "absorbed everything, the miasmic vapors and the perfumes, the soft whisperings of dead memories, the long cradling rhythms of the metaphors — murmuring chaplets of madrigals filled with mysticism." He found in it excuses for his inaction and malady of self-analysis; it was a literary hasheesh that weakened his will and his energy, and estranged him still further from Reality and from the active rôle he needed to rectify his spirit and restore in him a healthy selfhood.

He fell into that torpor of the will which the monks of the Middle Ages feared. He fell perhaps into a more dangerous vice. All through his seventeenth year he had known the temptations of the flesh that come to boys after a Sunday spent at home, as they return to their school prison through darkening streets, where venal love smiles down from every window. We can read this in the "Stances à Sainte-Beuve." He also mentions there the "fallacious pleasures" that lead astray the heroines of "Femmes damnées" — which may explain his expulsion from college in April, 1839, the year he was to take his baccalaureate.

Whatever the cause of that exclusion, we can imagine the diatribe from the General which it drew down upon him. Properly humiliated, he was sent to a tutor and then allowed to finish his studies in the Pension Bailly near the Panthéon, a private boarding school which was really an Abbey of Thelema, where all his repressions could enjoy a certain relief in the greater liberty permitted. As his stepfather's honors had multiplied, he had found it harder to face him; all his dwindled and suffering ego needed this liberty, as we can see in a very constrained letter to the General, congratulating him upon his last promotion.

Now he could pore to his heart's content over "Volupté", from which he learned the bitter joys of "scratching one's wound to get pleasure out of pain" — the delights of melancholy for nerves too

highly strung. Thus he was "bored" by the perpetual gaiety of his tutor's family, when after passing his baccalaureate examination he went with them to the country. "They are happier than we are", he wrote his mother. "In your house I found tears, altercations with my stepfather and your nervous fits, but I prefer *us*, just so."

He adds that he is lonely, that he has no one to tell of his great longings, his "fears of life", or simply his emotions over a sunset. So clearly he was ripe for deeper experiences, when, for lack of a better place to lodge him outside the family, he was sent back to the pension after the summer of 1839, his school duties finished. And we must pause to ask: What did he get from his classical training, the training he shared with fellow pupils like Leconte de Lisle and Louis Ménard?

The former called him "a born classicist." But Baudelaire did not acquire at school that vision of antiquity which helped Leconte de Lisle to escape from the utilitarian world of the eighteen-forties. He became neither a Hellenist like Ménard nor a lover of "the grandeur that was Rome"; classical Roman authors did not interest him so much as the highly colored style of the Decadence, or the stammering verses of the medieval Church. He took prizes for Latin verse at school, but his taste for Latin titles was due to his reticence and his mysticism, to his response to the language of the Mass and the hymns, heard amid the fragrance of incense

at his mother's side; he loved this mysterious and sonorous Latin, the language of the Devil and of medieval magic and the Cabala.

But Rome taught him a greater lesson through the French classics in which her genius of form is glassed. The poet is born, not made; and the best proof of Baudelaire's election is the taste that led him directly to the masters, and showed him the secrets of perfection drawn from antiquity by Malherbe and Racine. Like them he learned how to write Alexandrines as densely compacted as Latin, lines sharply realistic as Boileau's and reverberant as Victor Hugo's. The "acrid milk of learning" he speaks of in the "Stances" gave its ferment to the philter he brewed, in "Les Fleurs du mal."

When Baudelaire left school the General had for some time been pressing him to fit himself for government service. This struggle was to last for three years longer. There were "abominable scenes", constantly recurring, after which the youth would remember that he had only to wait, passively resisting, until he was of age and could demand his patrimony.

In a letter written long afterward, his mother shows her weakness and her sympathy for her husband's resolution. According to this letter, Aupick "dreamed of a golden future" for his stepson. "He wanted to see him reach a high social position [in the diplomatic service, is indicated by a corrected line], which was not impossible to obtain, as he

was a friend of the Duc d'Orléans. . . . But Charles rebelled against all we wanted to do for him, he made up his mind to fly with his own wings, to be an author. What a disappointment in our home life, so happy until then. What a sorrow!"

The letter depicts the sentimental Madame Aupick to the life. She was justified as a mother, since at that time a "literary career" meant to all good bourgeois the dire poverty and low debauches of the group then called "La bohême." Murger has turned their sufferings into humor in his merry "Scènes de la vie de bohême", but that idyl must be corrected by Balzac's story of Lucien de Rubempré or of Rastignac. Truth to tell, Baudelaire's friends at this time were not often from this group which in his cult of Byron's elegance he affected to despise; they included Balzac, Ourliac, Le Vavasseur, Delatouche, the author of "Fragoletta"; the visionary Gérard de Nerval, already famous for his translation of "Faust", and steeped in the occult lore that fascinated the future poet.

The real Bohemians he knew only slightly in these first years of his freedom in the capital. But he adopted, especially in good society and for the benefit of his stepfather, the truculent language made famous by a minor Romanticist whose violence helped to kill the movement. He loved to talk in the brutal style of Pétrus Borel, because all his impulses had been curbed so long.

"He was a high-pitched soul", says a friend who knew him then, "sometimes full of mysticism and

sometimes of an immorality and cynicism (merely of words) which outran all the limits of decorum; he was in a word an eccentric type, overcome with admiration for poetry, and reciting on every occasion Hugo's verses and Gautier's. . . . A topsy-turvy mind." This sketch may be enriched by a few traits from another friend's memories: "Reserved and caustic, a pagan through a spirit of rebellion and dissolute through curiosity, he would torture his intellect in order to mock at his heart."

It would seem that these are successive portraits of the young egotist who was so divided between sentiment and irony. Proud, timid and long oppressed, he could only affirm himself against the world by opposing all convention, or at least by adopting in his speech the opinions that shocked his parents and society in general. His sick ego made the desire to astonish the great concern of his life. First he posed at being immoral, because he was timid; but when one is eighteen friends are too sarcastic to allow professed vice to remain a pose. Unchecked at the "Abbey of Thelema" where he still lived, Baudelaire now passed into the school of reality.

He took a mistress. Being timid and sensitively conscious of his frigid response to passion, he avoided the grisettes who might have laughed at him, and chose a courtesan experienced in her arts. She was a Jewess called Louchette because of a squint; her ugliness and ignorance are depicted in a youthful poem which for sheer brutality outdoes Borel and all

his imitators. Baudelaire tried to degrade love to a physiologic function, in revenge upon an ideal love which at home and at Lyons he had known and lost; but the verses which evidently began as a parody terminate, despite the poet, in sentimentalism: they show that he took Louchette in order to forget his loneliness and his isolation.

Baudelaire's schoolmate Prarond affirms that the poet was "infatuated", and that his later memories of Louchette were "not merciful." Possibly it was she who cursed him with the syphilis from which he suffered all his life. He was "very young" when the infection took place, as appears from the letters; and certainly he does not portray Louchette with any retrospective tenderness in the sonnet commemorating the "frightful Jewess."

The family of course knew nothing of the affair nor of its probable consequences. But the youth's cynical and immoral remarks at home were enough to make them awaken to the perils of freedom in Paris for a boy of scarcely twenty. There were many scenes and many reprimands; finally — as he related it — he made some remark at a dinner where there were guests and was openly corrected by his soldier step-father, whom he rushed upon, after icily informing him that he had been insulted and "was going to have the honor" of strangling him. If this story is true, it is no wonder that the Colonel often blamed him "for making his mother ill."

At any rate there was some quarrel that brought matters to an issue, and a family council was held.

This council decided to send Baudelaire away on a long voyage to the Indies, taking money from his patrimony to defray its expenses. His parents felt that they must make good use of the last remnant of their authority, now that he would soon be of age and master of his fortune. Forcibly removed from the temptations of Paris and the "evil friendships" which made him talk so wildly, given in their stead a taste of the joys of travel, he might possibly care to be an attaché; and new companions might distract him from his mad dream of wasting his talent rhyming verses.

Baudelaire made no opposition to the plan, so at the end of May, 1841, he was placed in charge of a sea captain about to sail from Bordeaux for Mauritius, Ceylon and Calcutta — a voyage of at least eighteen months, for in those days there was no Suez Canal and it was necessary to double the Cape of Good Hope. A year and a half: that would keep him out of mischief for seven months after he was twenty-one. Colonel Aupick had learned strategy under Napoleon and during the conquest of Algeria, but he reckoned without his stepson, fully determined to become a man of letters at Paris, as soon as he should be of age. Already the poet saw in the journey a chance of being alone with his thoughts and his books. For he took books with him — afterward he boasted that he had read on the ship the complete works of Balzac.

Throughout the voyage he adopted a pose of absolute indifference, which he maintained even during

a five-day storm at sea — a hurricane in which they lost a mast and were almost shipwrecked. Timid as he was, Baudelaire played his rôle perfectly: but the shock of this experience still haunted his dreams twenty years after, for in the final quatrain of "Les sept vieillards", he compares his soul to a dismasted hulk tossed madly upon a vast and shoreless sea.

An heroic pose thus filled him with courage, and another pose soon afforded him solitude for thought or writing. During the voyage the young man resisted the advances of the kindly and well-meaning captain, who was evidently prompted by the General; he avoided the other passengers and alienated every one by the antisocial and immoral paradoxes which had so shocked his parents. At Mauritius however, he made friends of a distinguished Creole family, which — as so often happens in remote colonies — still preserved the manners and language of France under the *ancien règime*. It was truly another world that he found here, a world "all but perished" except in what he still remembered of the graces and courtesies of his dead father. With this society he fell in love, and perhaps too with his hostess, Madame Autard:

> On fragrant shores that tropic suns caress,
> I knew, beneath a golden canopy
> Of palms that dripped with drowsy idleness,
> A charming Creole, lost to history. . . .
>
> Wert thou to sail, Milady, to the far
> River of glory, or the verdant Loire,
> Thou, fairer far than châtelaines of old,

Thou wouldst arouse, in shadowy groves apart,
A thousand songs in every poet's heart,
— New slaves thy great dark eyes would win and hold.

At Mauritius the mast was replaced, and after eighteen days Baudelaire had to say good-by and proceed with the ship to the island of Bourbon. From this port he despatched to Monsieur Autard the sonnet he had written, together with a punctilious letter. "It is right, decent and proper that verses addressed to a lady by a young man should pass through her husband's hands before reaching her." And the note ends: "if I did not love and regret Paris so much, I would stay on with you as long as I could, and force you to like me and to consider me a little less *baroque* than I seem to be."

But the Traveler-in-spite-of-himself refused to go farther than Bourbon, and even to set his foot on the island. For three weeks he sulked on the vessel, in the harbor; those dazzling waves could not make him forget the Seine, the "river of glory" which was his goal, and fabled India itself had no power to lure him onward. He was firm in his refusal, and the captain finally had to send him back to Bordeaux by another ship.

So early in February, 1842, he turned up again at General Aupick's, a quite unexpected and none too welcome prodigal. It was the Carnival season and the skies of Paris were gray with clouds, yet the holiday spirit of the maskers in the streets must have symbolized the glory of his hopes. The past was dead; the voyage was ended at last. Never again did

he care to speak of it or of his adventures, except in mocking exaggeration; even his mother had to learn from the captain the story of the dismasted ship. Impatience had spoiled the journey for him. But his memories of tropic shores were to find place in his verses, and all his life he was to bear the imprint of his Oriental Odyssey.

It gave him the poem "L'albatros", undoubtedly suggested by the plight of a bird captured during the voyage and tethered to the deck:

> . . . How limp the wingèd rover lies! how weak
> And comic, sprawling while a horde
> Of sailors push their pipes beneath its beak
> Or limp to mock the bird that lately soared!
>
> The poet too can ride the flying cloud,
> —Mock at the bowman, soar above the gale,
> But dragged to earth amid the scornful crowd,
> He churns his giant wings, of no avail.

He was the albatross, tormented by those who held him captive. But chains had only strengthened his muscles, struggling to be free. The enforced solitude of those nine months, coming at the time of life when one is most impressionable, had turned him still farther back upon himself, fixed forever his habit of seeking out, analyzing and recording sensations. Nothing could change him now. He would give his life to writing, like Balzac, whose books had day after day filled him with the will power of their heroes. Two months would bring his freedom, and then he would not forget that lesson, a lesson

reinforced by the energy of the ocean which had hour by hour cradled his obsession and fortified his will:

> Dear as thy freedom, man, the ocean is!
> The sea's thy looking-glass; behold thy soul
> In the long billows that forever roll,
> Thy bitter spirit in that salt abyss. . . .
>
> And yet 'tis countless centuries that ye
> — O ruthless warriors! — have fought and striven:
> Brothers by lust for death and carnage driven,
> Twin wrestlers, gripped for all eternity!

III · THE DANDY

In an early sonnet "Le rebelle", Baudelaire describes a youth who refuses to obey his Good Angel's command to love the maimed and ugly. And there is a portrait of the poet at twenty-one which might be called "The Young Rebel", — a lithograph made in one of the studios where he loved to spend his days, by his friend Deroy, the artist. In this lithograph the soft curly beard, long hair and indolent pose of the sitter only give accent to the quick dark eyes, sharp as those of a panther about to spring. Those eyes are like Leyden jars of galvanic energy, imminently explosive.

"How many rebellious spirits" — Baudelaire wrote later — "have sprung into being in the presence of a cruel and punctual soldier of the Empire! One fine day the poor brave soul explodes: the Satanic spell is broken, leaving only what is needed, a grain of yeast for the bread to come."

His revolt had first masked itself in an equivocal compliance; then came a passive obstinacy which made him deaf to the desires of his parents. In this negative resistance which only partially appeased his ego, he held before himself another goal, the heroic rôle of the oppressed, the desire to be a complete man. He would never consent to be a

functionary or a cog in the social machine. He would not even consent to be an ordinary dishevelled Romantic poet; he would be a complete man, no specialized intelligence, but a man of the world. Because this type which he calls "the dandy" possesses "an eternal superiority over all other men."

In formulating his ideal of the dandy, which he spiritualized and enlarged as he came to see its social insufficiencies, Baudelaire admittedly first put too much emphasis upon mere externals: too long had his conduct been a thing apart from his convictions. So conduct itself became an ideal: "The dandy must aspire to be uninterruptedly sublime. He ought to live and even to sleep in front of a mirror." Work was secondary for him as for Wilde and the æsthetes of a later day; Baudelaire considered it "very hideous to be a useful man." But this paradox was aimed at the Utilitarians and the first socialists, who were then beginning to preach that each man must work for all. Like Flaubert and like Gautier, who had flayed these folk in the Preface to "Mademoiselle de Maupin", Baudelaire hated the materialism of the Bourgeois monarchy, with its motto "*Enrichissez-vous.*" He hated the money-grubbing, parvenu, modern world of his day — Balzac's world and ours.

"It is through leisure that I have grown", wrote Baudelaire at forty: "grown in part to my great detriment, since leisure without a fortune increases one's debts and the cares arising from debts, — but to my great advantage, from the standpoint of my impressionability, meditative power and the faculty

BAUDELAIRE AT TWENTY-THREE

By Deroy

of being a dandy and a dilettante." The addition "dilettante" shows that he thought of his father's ideal as well as of Musset's debonair heroes.

He also thought of Byron's example and of that idol of the Romanticists, Don Juan de Maraña, and in 1846 he published his poem "Don Juan aux enfers":

When to the nether world Don Juan came
And gave his coin to Charon on the shore,
A dark proud beggar, flashing eyes of flame,
Laid strong avenging arms on either oar.

With naked pendant breasts and robes undone,
Women were writhing 'neath the pitchy sky,
And like a holocaust behind the Don
His victims trailed a long and wailing cry.

Came laughing Sganarelle to claim his hire,
While old Don Luis raised his palsied hand
To make the wandering dead men all admire
That shameless son who mocked his last command.

His chaste Elvira, gaunt in widow's weeds,
Gazed shivering at her wedded paramour,
As for a parting smile a woman pleads
— Sweet as the vow that pledged a heart unsure.

A man of stone, — stark, armored shape of fear —
Stood at the helm and clove the Stygian tide;
But the calm hero leaned on his rapier,
Stared at the wake and scorned to look aside.

His ideal was Don Juan with his impassivity; pride was also his staff of courage.

He would be a dandy and a connoisseur of the arts, so he left his stepfather's house as soon as he could

draw upon his fortune, seventy-five thousand francs, equivalent to fifteen thousand dollars. No longer did he need to go home after spending half the night in dissipation or literary argument, and face a lecture or a frigid silence in the morning. He showed his timidity by the secrecy of this exit; but there is an incisive finality in the tone of his letter to his mother, explaining his departure by the fact he "cannot make himself over" to suit her husband. Then he took a small apartment on the Ile Saint-Louis.

Despite the march of progress the Ile Saint-Louis is still a delightful quarter for a poet's lodgings. In 1842 it was Elysian — a tranquil solitary village which nothing but footbridges connected with the busier streets of Paris. Baudelaire loved the island so absolutely forgotten in the midst of the capital; for nearly two years he could be seen walking bareheaded along its narrow streets or ancient quays, giving himself the egotistic illusion that he was a "*propriètaire.*" And as he delighted in the society of artists, he soon moved to a house filled with them, the stately old Hôtel de Lauzun on the northern quay — then called the Hôtel Pimodan.

His apartment was high above the ground under the mansard roof; here he could work in quiet, for he had blurred all but the topmost panes of his windows so as to see nothing but the clouds. We remember the prose-poem describing the dreamer who loves nothing in the world but clouds. But not less significant is the fact that on the window ledge there stood

THE HÔTEL PIMODAN

a vivarium filled with curious reptiles. Clouds and lizards typified dreams and reality, typified his dehumanized idealism and his craving for stimulus even from revulsion.

We have a description of this apartment, where for a short time Baudelaire even boasted a valet. The poet Banville visited him in the Hôtel Pimodan, and remembered the walls with their figures of red and black, the gilding, the giant armchairs and divans, large enough for a race of Titans. No books were visible in the poet's chambers; like the dishes they were hidden away in cupboards masked by the woodwork. It was a modest apartment: Baudelaire preferred rooms not too large or high of ceiling, because "intimate feelings are only collected at leisure in a very restricted space." Even insensitive natures experience at times the insomniac effects of vast bedchambers.

A poet's dreams also make the atmosphere of his rooms. In the prose-poem "L'invitation au voyage" we have a description of the ideal apartment he would have loved to possess, lighted by setting suns filtered through curtains as at Neuilly and hung with "paintings as calm and profound as the souls of the artists who created them" — rooms filled with furniture "huge, curious and strange", with mirrors and metals and goldsmiths' work to "make for the eyes a mute mysterious symphony", amid a fragrance "like a call back to Sumatra, which is the very soul of the place."

Paintings at least he could have and he bought

many; he thought he had discovered several Bassanos and was often found dreaming before them. He collected etchings and engravings; his walls were hung with Delacroix's lithographs of Hamlet, the hero of his bitter adolescence; later he collected Japanese prints because of their yet unrecognized beauty. He had a desk in old lacquer; in his enthusiasm for collecting he was often to pay deposits on bric-a-brac that he never had the money to claim.

To make his first "finds" he had only to go downstairs. On its ground floor the Hôtel Pimodan housed an antique shop, whose treasures soon drew and bound a new victim by his lust of the eye. The spider who lurked within was a certain usurer named Arondel, a most accommodating fellow who gave unlimited credit. He even lent money and Baudelaire got four thousand francs by the simple expedient of signing notes for three times that amount. But was he not wealthy and destined to be yet wealthier, when his books sold like Victor Hugo's?

Baudelaire also wished to be well-dressed, for he knew the power of dress to reinforce one's ego. He had stood as a badly dressed and even ragged schoolboy in front of a Rhadamanthus in a gold-braided uniform. When he escaped from the Collège Louis-le-Grand he had already devised a costume that made him look like an English secretary to an ambassador, and adopted a slender gold-knobbed cane. Now he considered again "every fold" of his clothes, until like his chambers they seemed an incrustation of his personality.

Black for all seasons and every time of day: a frock coat with short tails, a long waistcoat buttoning high but left open to show a shirt of very fine linen, with pleated cuffs, and with a collar rolling like Byron's; an ample black cravat carelessly tied and loose enough to avoid all resemblance to the then fashionable stock; full trousers of black cashmere, a silk top hat specially designed after his own ideas, with a flat brim and a tapering bell-shaped crown; shoes black in winter and white in summer and spotless as his linen.

In this costume he broke away from the careless or motley dress of the Romanticists whose vagaries outdid the red waistcoat Gautier wore at the *première* of "Hernani", and at the same time he set himself apart from the hated bourgeois with their tight trousers; for if clothes do not show what we are, they may at least show what we are not. Baudelaire's costume was at the same time "fashionable, sensible because suited to all occasions, and highly individual in its sharp black silhouette." His friends called him "a Byron tailored by Brummell."

He wanted to distinguish himself, to be "different", and he showed it best by his conception of life. "Unlike most men, who work before they live, and find life and action only in their recreation, Baudelaire began by living", says one of his intimates: "inquisitive, contemplative and fond of analysis, he conducted his mind from one spectacle to another and from one conversation to another. He fed its hunger with external things, tested it by contradiction;

and in this way his work was the résumé of his life, or rather its flowering."

How then did the poet-dandy spend his days of leisure? Undoubtedly much as did Barbey d'Aurevilly, who has left a diary of his life from the year 1838. Barbey too was a young man of fashion, a youth who loved to set tongues wagging by his dress and by his repartee, and he too was planning to become a man of letters. He reveals to us the life of the Romantic æsthete of 1840.

What we find in Barbey's diary is this: mornings spent in bed, because one must sleep sometime, chocolate served by a valet, while the recumbent dandy read his letters or whiled away an hour answering one or musing on his fair correspondent. Then an interval of study or reading, interrupted by the daily call of the coiffeur, or the tailor with a new coat, or a friend who asked him to Véfour's for luncheon. Often whole days spent in more or less serious reading, until he had to dress for dinner. Visits to bookshops, to a florist, to his favorite glove shop; calls upon actresses, walks on the boulevards or stops at some exhibition. A leisurely dinner unless it was followed by the theater, and a midnight discussion on politics or the fine arts to end an arduous day. No, not end it, for this young idler usually read in bed for an hour or more and fell asleep at about two o'clock.

With all his apparent lack of purpose, Barbey never neglected his cult of self, and seized every chance to enrich his background and to sharpen

his epigrams. His ambition was to dominate society through his personality or by a book; in an age of peace Byron was a better model than Napoleon. Barbey never lost sight of his goal, any more than he lost sight of his face and figure in the pier glass of his apartment. On the days when he had to dine out he ate nothing for fear of losing his waistline!

Equally circumspect were all his rules of conduct. His ideal, according to this diary, was "to be extremely singular in his opinions, but very conventional in his manners, hard even to ferocity in his judgments about things and even more so about persons, but cold even to utter disdain (slaying with words like bullets, dispassionately), grave and intellectual in his morning habits which make his reputation, but a man of the world when he puts on evening dress at night, and making war on pedantry of all sorts, — expressing austere opinions in light and mocking words, and trifles in solemn phrases, so that when listening to him, one never knows where one is, — not gay, never laughing except in mockery, laughter being an evident proof of superiority; not melancholy either . . . never acting like others, because others almost always lack distinction . . ." But more impressive than this programme of Barbey's is the number of serious books he read and made notes on in his "idleness", whose only drawbacks were fits of boredom and that longing to escape from self that comes from living in self.

Baudelaire too, if less favored by fortune and weaker before temptation than Barbey, never lost

sight of his purpose to write. He knew, as he assured his mother, that posterity would have to deal with him; and, at twenty-one, he felt that his chief need was experience. Thanks to his fortune he had two years of fruitful idleness with books and friends, poets and artists of his own generation. One of them describes this life for us:

"We used to wander around a great deal together, going to dine at the wine-merchant Duval's . . . sometimes at the Tour d'Argent. . . . Very often it was outside the fortifications, in a good tavern, at the Moulin de Montsouris, among fields which were then almost houseless. . . . There we had around us a sparse lawn, a bit of hedge, a few trees; on one side a view as far as the fortress of Charenton, on the other a view of all Paris. A good nook for philosophizing. So about five o'clock in the afternoon we would start out in search of a place despised by the bourgeois and suited to conversations lively and meaty, on literature or the fine arts or even ethics. The Chaussée du Maine and the Rue de la Tombe-Issoire heard on certain days statements that would have made the Palace of the French Academy fall in ruins."

Manuscripts were read at these dinners and then discussed. Prarond, a comrade of the Pension Bailly, and another young poet proposed that he should publish his verses with theirs in a joint volume. But when they criticized his realistic diction, Baudelaire withdrew. He decided to refrain from publishing and to perfect his verses, which he did not how-

ever refuse to read if friends were urgent enough. Then he would declaim them "in a voice monotonous but commanding, which compelled the attention of those outside the group."

Before the end of 1845 he had recited thus a large number of his poems,[1] which he never exhibited until they were polished to his complete satisfaction. Some of his friends assert that most of "Les Fleurs du mal" were composed during this period, and we know that a few years later he had finished enough to make two volumes, which he had had copied by a calligrapher and bound in gilt.

But Baudelaire now had other things to do. There were new acquaintances to talk with, besides his former schoolmates, two of whom, Leconte de Lisle and Louis Ménard, were to become famous. He met Banville, younger than he but with a book of verse already published; he met Sainte-Beuve, who had been almost his spiritual director since he had read "Volupté", and Doctor Esquiros, the dabbler in the history of occultism. He was presented to Victor Hugo and was soon to meet Gautier, his master in versification. He had his portrait painted, galvanic with energy; he made himself an electric figure in the cafés by phrases like: "I, the son of a priest", and was soon notorious for his sinister and sardonic humor. He visited studios and exhibitions and

[1] According to Crépet, these poems were: "L'albatros", "Don Juan aux enfers", "La géante", "Je t'adore à l'égal de la voûte nocturne", "Une charogne", "A une Malabaraise", "Le rebelle", "Les yeux de mon enfant", "Je n ai pas oublié . . .", "La servante au grand cœur", "Le crépuscule du soir", "L'âme du vin", "Le vin de l'assassin", "Allégorie."

theaters, for in all of them he found an escape into another world—the world of beauty. And it was for beauty that he lived, like all disciples of Théophile Gautier.

Gautier had defined this new æsthetic religion in "Mademoiselle de Maupin", which Swinburne called "the golden book of beauty" and George Moore defined as "that godhead of flowing line, that desire for such perfection of hanging arm and leaned thigh as leaves passion breathless and fain of tears." Baudelaire was sensitive enough to find in this gospel no less ecstasy than they. And we need not object that the desire of the Romanticists for perfection in plastic beauty was a delusion, no less than the desire for glory like Napoleon's, or for complete self-realization, or their vain craving for impossible sympathies from women in "elective affinities." All the Romantic longings became abysses of the infinite, gulfs of dreams too wide to bridge by facts. But who can realize this at twenty-one?

So Baudelaire sought for beauty in his first short story, "Le jeune enchanteur", published in 1846 but probably written in 1843. Like Gautier in his tales, he would pursue an exotic love in the past, fleeing in imagination from Paris to a marble villa on the blue Tyrrhenian Sea. He makes his hero fall in love with a figure in a wall painting of Olympus and its gods, so placed as to be visible only when the fires of sunset rise in a pyramid of flames to the summit of the mountain. A painted image of Aphrodite glimpsed at the end of a banquet drives this hero

out to ransack the world in search of the model who inspired it.

This is not very original; others besides Gautier had evoked similar word paintings, filled with classical architecture and peopled with houris fair as the statue that had recently been found on the island of Melos. Before 1845 young Flaubert had lived with fancies like these and then outgrown them. They resemble the usual dream Edens of adolescence; if they lasted longer in Baudelaire's mind it shows that, unlike Flaubert, the poet did not accept the lesson of reality. The story itself, padded with adventures worthy of the pen of Anne Radcliffe, is a proof of his undisciplined imagination.

Later he wrote two poems to Beauty: the first a sonnet presenting a purely sculptural ideal, cold as the conception he was now studying in Winckelmann; the other a "Hymne" which reveals his difference from Gautier, who was a modern pagan with no repressions. Baudelaire could never shake off the Catholic dualism, that consciousness of our warring flesh and spirit, despite the fact that he was now crushing against his tongue the taste of elaborate oaths and atheistic or Satanic paradoxes made to shock the philistine. It was his childhood that made him fear that beauty might be of the devil, and his worship only the lust of the eyes:

> Dost come, O Beauty, from the sky's abyss
> Or from the Pit? Infernal yet divine,
> Shedding their good or evil all amiss,
> Thine eyes are only comparable to wine. . . .

What care I if thou come from heaven or hell,
Thou miracle, vast, awesome, ever new —
If eyes, foot, smile — if thou unlock the spell
— The infinite I love but never knew?

What care I, fay of tranquil velvet gaze,
If God or Satan gave thee, rhythm, spark
Or fragrance — if thou speed my lagging days
— Mine only queen! — and make my world less dark?

He worshipped everywhere this goddess — for as the poem shows only too clearly by its merging of impersonal imagery into a feminine figure, the Beauty that he sought was Woman. To find a woman to clothe with his visions he haunted the theaters, which he had loved since childhood, — because an actress was all women, even the woman of his imagining, the sylphide. He sought the fairy of the pantomime, commemorated in "L'irréparable"; and he was not long in finding an incarnation of his ideal, for he was twenty-one.

At the Théâtre du Panthéon one evening in 1842 he found the vision he was seeking. An ironical fate presented her without wings or tinsel, as a maid-servant whose rôle was limited to announcing dinner. But the absence of wings did not matter; all that he could see was her eyes; and he celebrated them in a poem he never included in his volume, — "Les yeux de mon enfant":

. . . The eyes I love are dark and deep and vast
As thou, great Night, and luminous as thou!
For burning Love and Faith untarnished glow
Within their darkling velvet wells amassed.

Jeanne Duval had the soft gaze of a Creole, as we may see by the sketch that the poet has left us. Very tall, with "eyes big as platters", she had a veritable mane of rebellious blue-black hair, so crisply curly that it defied all efforts of the brush and burst in ringlets from her head like a crown of serpents. Hers was "the type of beauty seen in Tiepolo's etchings"; her walk and her gestures had the indefinable grace of "a goddess or a wild animal." She was a quadroon or an octoroon, probably from San Domingo, and was about seventeen.

She was beautiful and she was strange, and this latter quality he considered the very condition of beauty. To his friends she might be "*une fille de couleur*", but to him she was La Malabaraise, a statuesque lovely thing from another world. She recalled to him thoughts of his voyage, as we may see in "Parfum exotique", that picture of a lotus land baked by a never-changing sun, filled with strange trees and curious fruits and clear-eyed children of nature. In the warmth of that vision we can see that he was already a little weary of the gray skies of Paris.

Jeanne was Dorothée, the sylphide who was later to inspire his famous poem in prose. Ignorant, "very passive", very silent beside the fireplace where she loved to cast off the trammeling stays and footgear of civilization, she was a primitive creature, appealing as a child in her ignorance and her large-eyed melancholy calm. Thus she first gave him pleasure uncorrupted by fear. If she understood only his

flesh, she gained by that defect the alien charm of Lilith the forbidden; and her lover found her silence itself a kind of sorcery:

> I worship thee no less than night's blue urn,
> O vase of sorrow mute and tall : — I yearn
> More deeply toward thee when, avoiding me,
> Thou dost — O boon of night! — in irony
> Add leagues on leagues to all the depths that lie
> Between my clutching arms and God's blue sky. . . .

She was a Lilith, this girl of another race who like a slave let him drape her in his exotic dreams. He loved her for her savage blood, defiantly. He was now the hermit confronted by the naked nymphs in his father's drawing, hung in the tabooed drawing-room. She was the temptress of Holy Anthony in his long-neglected "Lives of the Saints"; she was the lovely Mathilde in Lewis' blood-curdling novel, and he was the monk carried off by the Devil!

But she was more than this to him, for she was Beauty. He found in her the good and the evil, the love draught, the fatality which he celebrated later in the "Hymne": she was the torch and he the "dazzled mayfly" that crackled in her flame and "glorified his doom." She was the miracle made flesh. So we must see her now, not as she soon became, but as Baudelaire first saw her, an image rather than a woman, an image destined not only to inspire magical verses, but to remain with him like the vision that closes "Une martyre": a vision which her crimes against him could never quite destroy:

With all her pearly waving draperies
She moves in measures lovely as a dance,
As cobras long in Hindoo sorceries,
Led by the fakir's moving rod, advance.

Insensible to human suffering
As drear Sahara's sand or azure skies,
Or the long lacy nets the surges bring,
Her slow indifferent length she amplifies.

Her eyes are made of agates polished bright,
And in that strange symbolic soul that links
The inviolate angel and the fabled sphinx,

Where all is gold, steel, diamonds and light,
Glitters forever, regal and inhuman,
The starlike coldness of the sterile woman.

IV · THE SUCCUBA

THE story of Baudelaire's love life is the story of Daudet's "Sapho." Older readers at least will remember how the hero of the novel meets a woman of the Latin Quarter, whom he carries up five weary flights of stairs to his room. Twenty-five years ago Olga Nethersole played the title rôle of the drama made from the story, and many envied her stage-lover's torture, as he toiled upward, chained by her beautiful arms. The novel sets forth more brutally the hero's agony then and afterward: his life was symbolized by those five stories surmounted under a burden he could not cast down, like a fast-growing chimera whose claws were set deep in his shoulders.

Baudelaire too has written his "Sapho" in "La Fanfarlo." For this story is a bit of his own life. It is as realistic in subject matter as any novel by Champfleury, the author's collaborator on the journal where he made his début in 1846, the *Corsaire-Satan*. But the Champfleury who put himself and all his friends into his fiction was hardly a man to help a poet to write objectively of objective reality.

So there is no need to say who served Baudelaire for model when he drew the hero of "La Fanfarlo", Samuel Cramer, a Romantic poet of the macabre school. "His noble forehead, his eyes bright as drops of coffee, his teasing ironical nose, impudent

sensual lips, square despotic chin and pretentiously Raphaelesque locks" are traits which the author found in his looking-glass. — "He is at the same time a great idler, a gloomy son of ambition and an unfortunate genius. . . . His poetry shines more brilliantly in his person than in his books." Samuel Cramer's "epic indolence" is Baudelaire's.

"Filled with shadows and lightning flashes, lazy and enterprising, fruitful of difficult projects and ridiculous failures," his is a mind "in which paradox often assumed the proportions of candor . . . an imagination as vast as his laziness and loneliness." Samuel thinks himself the peer of all the writers he admires; he is one of the new school, of those who decipher painfully the mystic pages of Plotinus and Porphyrus, then find in Crébillon the Younger analogies with another side of their nature: who turn from the works of the cabalist Jérôme Cardan to Laurence Sterne and to Rabelais. Temperamentally he is a comedian; he loves to enact tragi-comedies behind locked doors; he owes twenty thousand francs. — The likeness is correct even to this detail, for his parents' supervision made it necessary for Baudelaire to live on credit.

Other touches prove that the portrait is the poet's own. "He had been furiously devout, in like manner he was now passionately atheistic. He was all the artists he had ever studied and all the books he had ever read . . . and yet he remained profoundly original. He was always the easy-going, the fantastic, the indolent, the terrible, the learned, the

ignorant, the untidy, the dainty Samuel Cramer . . . He never succeeded in anything, because he believed too firmly in the impossible."

Baudelaire had written a poem called "The Albatross"; his hero has finished a volume of sonnets called "Ospreys." Samuel finds in the Luxembourg Gardens an old playmate-sweetheart of his school days at Lyons, Madame de Cosmelly, and seeing that she is unhappy discreetly courts her in the fallacious language of Sainte-Beuve's novel "Volupté." It seems very likely that Madame de Cosmelly is the girl first loved "for love's sake alone" in the poet's early 'teens, at Lyons. At any rate Baudelaire confesses that every detail of the story is true, excepting the names.

The identity of the author and his hero makes significant Samuel's reply when Madame de Cosmelly asks him why he prefers funereal themes and descriptions of dead bodies:

"Pity me, Madam, or rather pity us, for I have many brothers like me: it is our hatred of all men and of ourselves that has led us toward these falsities. It is despair of our abilities to attain nobleness and beauty by natural means that has made us paint up our faces so queerly." This reminds us that whatever its original cause, Baudelaire's cult of horror was shared by many others in the eighteen-forties.

Samuel Cramer's malady is self-analysis and introspection. "We have striven so hard to make our hearts sophisticated, we have so misused our microscopes studying their ugly warts which we love to

magnify, that we cannot speak the language of other men. . . . We have analyzed our psychology like madmen, who increase their insanity by striving to understand it. . . . We have twisted our passions into ugly shapes. Woe, thrice woe, to the senile fathers who begot us rachitic and out of love's season, predestined as we are to bring forth only stillborn babes!"

One sees the personal reference beneath this parody of Romantic rhetoric. Reading it, one feels too that Baudelaire did well to express the emotions of his youth in verse that curbed him, reserving prose for his ideas. For lack of that check the parodist is often caught in his own pathos, like Samuel: "with that devilish man, the great problem always is to know where the comedian in him begins." So too with Baudelaire.

Indeed the very plot of "La Fanfarlo" is a paradox, worthy of its author and reminiscent of the eighteenth-century erotic novels he loved. Reduced to tears by the poet's sympathy, Madame de Cosmelly confesses at last that her husband has given his love to an actress, a dancer; and matching her woman's tact against his unctuous eloquence, she lures him on by telling all she would feel for her avenger, until he swears to steal the love of the dancer from her husband. Samuel makes La Fanfarlo his mistress by a courtship which begins with hostile reviews of her acting; Madame de Cosmelly leaves him unrewarded and he finds himself caught inextricably in a vulgar *collage* with a courtesan.

The story ends in a picture as realistic as any Dutch painting. But a poet's cakes and ale are quite as important as his visions. Here are details which help to complete our picture of Jeanne and Baudelaire's life with her. La Fanfarlo loves gowns of crackling silk, heavy gowns covered with jet and tinsel; her earrings are almost as large as lusters; and her lover, who adores the barbaric robes of gypsy women, describes her in her dressing room lacing her boots, in a page vivid as a drawing by Manet. — One of Baudelaire's own pen sketches, which resemble Manet's, shows the ballerina in her dancing attire.

In the novelette he pens a lyrical page on the beauties of the dance and its importance. "The dance is as far above music, for certain temperaments at least, as the visible and created thing is above the thing unseen and uncreated. — Only those can understand me to whom music gives pictorial ideas. — The dance can reveal all the mysterious things that music conceals. . . . It is poetry endowed with arms and legs; it is matter, full of grace and terror, made living and beautiful by movement." All this precedes by many years Wagner's first performance at Paris. — But Samuel Cramer also has his ideas on integrating the arts: he is planning a book on the symbolic values of colors. Already we can see in Baudelaire that Æolian mystic sense which fifteen years later was to make him the herald of Wagner and the prophet of Symbolism.

He reveals the physical side of his highly strung

temperament through the feast described in the dancer's rooms, singing the praises of every kind of wine, of truffles, "which after a glass of Chio, have the effect of several ciphers after a number", of sauces and seasonings drawn from the whole pharmacopœia of nature. All his life Baudelaire loved the pleasures of the table.

He also loved rooms like Fanfarlo's, a low-ceiled room replete with silken luxury. In this room the ballerina is won by the poet's curious speeches, "now brutal as a bill of costs, now delicately fragrant as a bag of scent", and offers herself to Samuel, "the falsest, the most selfish, the most sensual, the greediest, the most spiritual" of young Romanticists, in a costume as simple as the one described in the poem "Les bijoux." But this absence of attire does not suit the poet, who makes Fanfarlo's maid return to the theater for the skirts she wore as Columbine, calling back the girl for a last command: "Don't forget the rouge!"

A true disciple of Gautier and his religion of Beauty, Samuel loved his mistress less with his senses than with his brain: his love was mainly "an admiration and a thirst for the beautiful . . . and that materialism was not far removed from the purest idealism." He found the infinite in his passion; if he was often alone in his heaven he was never bored in it. So when Madame de Cosmelly wrote gratefully that she was leaving Paris forever, Samuel had almost forgotten her.

La Fanfarlo sees the letter and takes her revenge

upon her lover. It is a bitter revenge and one worthy of an eighteenth-century intrigue. "Samuel had often aped passion: now he was forced to learn what it is." He came to know "the terrible, disheartening, shameful, morbid love of kept women"; he felt "all the tortures of jealousy, and the abasement and gloom that spring from knowing that one's malady is incurable. . . . He knew all the horrors of that vicious marriage which is called concubinage."

In a note of his diary Baudelaire wrote half-enviously that the joys of marriage could be divined in "an ardent concubinage." He says nothing on that page of the price, inescapable in any relation of the sexes. But what he paid is revealed in "La Fanfarlo."

The price he paid is also revealed in his "Choix de maximes consolantes sur l'amour", another contribution to the *Corsaire-Satan* in 1846.

This article too is admittedly a confession, because it begins with the axiom that "writers of maxims love to sketch their own character." Certainly Baudelaire is one of the poets here described, a hypersensitive poet, "whom the violin rends like a knife-blade searching for his heart", a poet who finds in love a sedative for nerves exasperated by long pursuit of the perfect phrase. When he says that joy in ugliness often comes from "a thirst for the unknown and a taste for the horrible", he is thinking of Louchette; when he speaks of the charm given by memory to a paramour's mistakes in spelling, he is thinking of Jeanne, who copied down his

verses as he composed them. "See that you do not teach your mistress French," he adds. "Stupidity is often an adornment to beauty: it is what gives the eyes the dull limpidity of black tarns, and the glaucous calm of tropical seas."

Black eyes and blue! But we surmise that he had already deceived the quadroon who was his chief inspiration here, with the "*modiste érudite et dévote*" to whom he dedicated "Franciscæ meæ laudes", since he would not chide a mistress for being "extravagant, or *devout*, or even unfaithful." Baudelaire is clearly the young lover he describes, the lover caught between the claims of an inherited morality and his appetite for a woman worthy of his contempt. "Numerous and ignoble infidelities [Jeanne deceived him with his coiffeur], habitual frequentation of vile places, shameful secrets revealed at the most inopportune moments inspire a horror for your idol, and it sometimes happens that your joy makes you shudder. Virtue and pride shout to you: Flee from her. But Nature whispers in your ear: Whither?" And he concludes that this wickedness is necessary, since it makes his beloved complete, makes her Woman.

But even so, says Baudelaire, one may love — or rather one must love — naïvely, and rejecting all paradox. We must not be Don Juans, nor even disciples of Gautier's ideal of plastic beauty: "In love, keep your mind away from the *moon* and the *stars*, away from the Venus of Milo, from lakes, guitars and rope-ladders, and from the finest novels in the

world. . . . But love the woman you love, love her well, love her with all your vigor and intelligence, love her like a Turk, love her fiercely . . . for love is the only thing worth the trouble of turning out a sonnet or of donning fine linen."

We must love fiercely: the fury of this counsel shows that Baudelaire meant it for himself. There were times when it was hard to love Jeanne, the ignorant and insatiable quadroon, who understood only one sort of love; times when he was forced to cry for mercy:

> Bizarre divinity, brown as the night,
> Fragrant with scents of musk and sharp havana . . .
> Waking, Desire's caravan, Joanna,
> Hastes to thine eyes, the wells of its delight.
>
> But let not, through these hatchways of thy soul
> — O demon pitiless! — such fires roll!
> No Styx am I, nine times to compass thee. . . .

Baudelaire's sufferings with Jeanne were more than physical. Not only did she deceive him habitually; she made scenes in the streets, and quarreled with him at home. Yet he could not break with her. She had him chained by her appeal to the artist in him. No stiffly corseted Parisienne of 1845 had her lovely animal grace, the grace he has put into "Le serpent qui danse" and "Le beau navire."

She had him chained by other graces less mentionable and more essential to a timid and nervous lover. Sophisticated and facile in the *ars amatoria*, she held him by his senses as by a vise. He rebelled at this:

Thou that like a swooping sword
Clovest deep my wailing heart,
Thou that like a demon-horde
Camest jewelled, mad, and art

Crushing me unto the ground
For thy bed and thy domain:
— Trull to whom my life is bound
As the convict to his chain,

As the dicer to his throw,
As the drunkard to his pots,
As the worm to all that rots
— Cursèd, cursèd, cursèd thou!

He rebelled against this purely sensual liaison; he longed for understanding and affection, and then he would write his mother and beg her to see him. Impossible to bring himself to go to her stately house, where he had to endure the ironic glances of flunkeys, or the carefully averted eyes of his stepfather; he could not ask her to come to the untidy rooms where Jeanne reclined, half-dressed, with a cigar between her lips and a glass at her elbow. In his lodgings there was always the danger of one of those disputes in which Jeanne used her woman's memory in order to retail her grievances from the first days of their liaison. To such scenes he certainly could not subject his mother. But they could meet in the Louvre, and in the Salon Carré she could hear his confession and give him strength to confront the future. Because, dandy as he was, he had to confess to her or to his muse.

These long-awaited meetings were not always

tranquil. None the less a mother is always a mother, and the Louvre made a background too harmonious, too cool and spiritual not to leave in him a hatred of the tawdry life to which he had to return, with its quarrels and debauches and their doleful effects upon him. "I am very tired", he writes her in an early letter: "I feel a sort of wheel turning in my head." And he implores her discretion: his confession of impotence must not fall into the hands of the living or of posterity. This was in December, 1847. It was in such moods that he turned to laudanum, as his letters show, and to the anodyne of exhaustion dispensed by Jeanne:

> Come to my breast, cold, cruel concubine,
> Beloved tiger, hydra indolent;
> Long will I drag my hands incontinent
> And quivering, through that heavy mane of thine; . . .
>
> I'll sleep, not live! I'll lose myself in sleep,
> In slumber soft as Death's uncertain shore,
> I'll sleep, and sow my drowsy kisses o'er
> Thy polished coppery arms and bosom deep.
>
> To drown my sobbing soul in silence, — oh!
> Thy bed alone, vile paramour, avails;
> Poppied oblivion from thy mouth exhales
> And through thy kisses floods of Lethe flow. . . .

To hours of utter weakness like this, when he drew a masochistic delight from his subjection, succeeded hours when he resented her lack of response to his fits of melancholy or despair. *Sunt lachrymæ rerum:* and the first of woman's spiritual qualities is

sympathy. At such times he came to hate her for her lack of feeling; he longed for that which must at last force her to understand:

When thou wilt sleep, my girl of shadowy gaze,
Down in the cold black marble of a tomb,
Thine only palace, bed or tiring-room
A dripping vault and grave where all decays,

When crushing stone thy fearful breast affrays,
And limbs now languorous lovely in the gloom
Feel, with thy heart and will, its weight of doom,
And halted feet forget their venturous ways,

The Grave, that knows my dream is infinite
(O Grave, the Poet's friend forever, thou!)
Throughout the long unending sleepless night

Will ask: "Art sorry, wretched wanton, now,
Not to have learned why dead men weep, perforce?"
— And worms will gnaw thy breast like faint remorse.

Death must at last avenge his vain craving for sympathy, his love now turned to hatred. But Baudelaire's hatred uses even stronger imagery in "Duellum", which presents the eternal battle of the sexes, when the first joys of passion stale and the sated senses turn panther-like upon the mate who has dragged love down into the abyss of lust.

"Absolute frankness is a way to originality", runs a note of the diary: Baudelaire will sing all his emotions with his mistress. But hate is nearer to love than indifference, and next to this sonnet, in "Les Fleurs du mal", he placed the lovely verses

entitled "Le balcon", which consecrate the memory of a reconciliation. Or was it many reconciliations blended into one picture? There is a prose version of such a moment in the diary, and this fragment serves as a commentary on the poem:

"Moved by the contact of those pleasures which were like memories, touched by the realization of an ill-spent past, the remembrance of so many faults, of so many quarrels, so many things that each had to hide from the other, he began to weep; and his hot tears fell in the darkness upon the bare shoulder of his dear and still lovely mistress.

"She quivered; she too felt touched and deeply stirred. Those two fallen creatures, still suffering from the remnants of their nobility, fell spontaneously into each other's arms, confusing in a rain of kisses and tears the sadness of their past with their very uncertain hopes for the future. Never presumably was love's joy so sweet to them as in that night of melancholy and charity, — a joy saturated with sorrow and remorse.

"Through the blackness of the night he had seen behind him the abyss of the years, then he had cast himself into the arms of his guilty mistress, to find there the forgiveness that he granted her."

Such a reconciliation explains "Le balcon":

> Mother of memories, first of mistresses,
> Thou, all my pleasure, thou, my fealties all!
> How dear our fireplace! How sweet our kiss!
> The charm of evenings past, wilt thou recall
> Mother of memories, first of mistresses?

Our evenings there before the glowing hearth,
Our evenings on the balcony veiled with rose;
How soft thy pillowing breast! how kind thy heart!
And oh! our whispers all imperishable, those
Long evenings there before the glowing hearth!

How softly shone the golden, shimmering sun!
How deep the skyey space! how rich love's power!
For on thy bosom, most belovèd one,
I sensed thy blood more fragrant than a flower.
How softly shone the golden, shimmering sun!

Night dropped her veils of shelter over us,
Eyes groped for widening eyes the black withheld,
I drank thy breath, O sweet, O poisonous,
Thy drowsy feet my palms fraternal held.
Night dropped her veils of shelter over us.

And I can live again those rapturous days!
For in thy knees I found my youth afresh.
Why seek afar thy lovely languorous ways
— Thy gentle heart and ever-cherished flesh —
If I can live again those rapturous days!

But — vows and fragrance, infinite desire —
Shall they arise from gulfs too deep to plumb,
As morn by morn new suns of rosier fire
Mount, laved in some deep-sea Elysium?
O vows! O fragrance! infinite desire!

Never perhaps has passion found such spiritual form as in the original of these stanzas. Yet if Baudelaire's "mother of memories" had not been the "pitiless demon" of "Sed non satiata", there would have been no forgiveness, no reconciliation, and no poem exhaled like a sigh from the depths of that experience, in gratitude for a moment of

fulfillment and silence that gave new wings to a dream.

Because after all a poet's love is a dream, all but independent of her who inspires it, — a longing that finds its fetish in a certain gaze or gesture, a certain moment of the Eternal Beauty that makes the sorcery of women, makes them the molders of men's destiny, *donec virenti canities abest*, and often even afterward. A poet's love is a dream, or the harpy feast that Life gives to the seekers of the impossible.

And so, in the glare of Baudelaire's inferno, we see how his spirit was rent by the war within him, the war between Reality and the Ideal, and how his divided heart voiced its inner conflict and avenged itself. Unable to forget his ideal he took his revenge by pitiless analysis, by realistically dragging Jeanne into still deeper mire. Thus he punished himself for his weakness, as a monk does penance — punished himself to satisfy the demoniac irony of the neurasthenic:

> For am I not a clashing chord
> In God's eternal symphony,
> Thanks to this gluttonous Irony
> Which shakes and cleaves me like a sword?

And by painting his lovely succuba in darker and darker tones, the poet ended by making her at once more vile, and — because he could soon go no farther — more sublime. He found a perverse satisfaction in plunging to the bottom of the abyss; his ignominy and Jeanne's was then complete, hence it

JEANNE DUVAL *circa* 1850

attained a sort of perfection which translated into verse satisfied his æsthetic sense no less than his egoism. And perhaps he loved her more for each poem in which his magic transfigured her baseness.

It is the metaphysics of ignominy that we find in the poems inspired by Jeanne Duval: they outline a transcendental philosophy of the chains of lust; Baudelaire, like his hero Samuel, has not studied Plotinus in vain. As we read "Les Fleurs du mal" we hear the double chorus whose mingled accents resound within him: the anguished voices mounting from the depths — voices torn by all the sufferings of the Damned, rising and growing in purity as they rise, until clarified they blend at last with the celestial notes — the clear pure voices of the Seraphim. It is the very theme of the Tannhäuser Overture: this is why the poet was destined to love Wagner, whose music pulses with the struggle which he can only indicate by words. But it was Baudelaire who in his earliest verses first found and voiced the double motif, which gives his poems to Jeanne the beauty of an orchid sprung from a decaying tree.

From the very first Jeanne had her rival in the soul of the poet whom she, like a sorceress of Thessaly, turned at times into a beast. She had a phantom rival that lured him on and tortured him by even sharper agonies.

That phantom torturer was his idealism, ineradicable through all his lapses. It was no longer religious but philosophical and æsthetic, yet it was none the less active. The infinite had always haunted him. He had sought it in the "conversations with God" which he had had as a child; it was in those years that his "tendency toward mysticism" began, and, a little later, his "coördinate interests in philosophy and in the beauty of prose and poetry", his "interest in the constant and co-existent relations of Life and the Ideal."

He longed to comprehend the beauty which thrilled him yet baffled his analysis; he hoped to learn how it could be evoked. Writing and speech were "magic operations, an evocatory sorcery." So he buried himself in the mystics Plotinus and Swedenborg; he read Winckelmann and Stendhal to discover the secrets of painting. Like all his generation he was familiar with Cousin's conception of Absolute Beauty, but as the portrait of himself in "La Fanfarlo" shows, he rejected the living professor of philosophy for the long-dead philosopher of Alexandria.[1]

[1] Now a pagan but trained a Catholic, Baudelaire could find in Plotinus also the doctrines of the existence of Evil, of the dual nature of man, of a Fall and of Purga-

In Neo-Platonism Baudelaire could find an explanation of his warring dual nature, of the response it gave to Ideal Beauty, of its lust to penetrate the secret of the Ideal. He wanted to "learn how to dream", how to evoke inspiration, that "magic art." He wanted to attain a complete "eurythmy of his character and faculties", to "increase all his faculties", to discover "a cult, Magianism or evocatory sorcery." During that period of study, when "like the Mages he dwelt beneath the sky", he acquired his real education, the education that only mature spiritual experience deepened by study can give. He set up for himself the contemplative ideal of life expressed at the beginning of "Les Fleurs du mal" in the poem "Elévation":

> Above the ponds, above the lakes and meres,
> Above the mountains, woods, the clouds, the sea,
> Beyond the sun, beyond the canopy
> Of heaven, and the far-flung starry spheres,
>
> O Mind, thou soarest easily and well, . . .
>
> Fly far beyond this foul and fetid mist;
> Go purge thy squalor in the blue above,
> And quaff the pure clear heavenly ichor of
> The fire cupped in vaults of amethyst. . . .

tory; he could read there that contemplation is the goal of life, and that only those too weak to attain it seek refuge in action. In Plotinus Baudelaire could find that Beauty is something that the soul recognizes as kindred to itself, and that even the objects perceived by the senses reveal the eternal. In Plotinus he read that the arts do not imitate nature, but go back to the Ideal; for "all things reveal the Universal Soul: all things derive from one and the same source . . . the sweetness of the most fragrant perfumes . . . the gleam of the most flashing colors . . . the rhythm and harmony of all the kinds of sounds which can charm the hearing."

It was well for him that for a time he could enjoy the leisure to range the infinite. For despite his belief that a dandy needs no fortune if he have "unlimited credit", he soon found that credit was not infinite. When he had run through half of his fortune his parents called a "*conseil judiciaire*" and had the remainder put in trust, reducing him to an income of two hundred francs (forty dollars) a month. This happened in September, 1844: his season of prosperity had lasted twenty-seven months. Thus the "*conseil judiciaire*" made him morally no less than legally a child: he had just enough money to avoid facing the realities of life.

Baudelaire was now dependent upon a notary, Monsieur Ancelle. Ancelle had all the common virtues; he was for twenty years mayor of Neuilly. He was kindly, jolly, a bit inquisitive about his curious ward and his ward's still more curious mistress, and not inclined to take very seriously his urgent requests for advances on his future income. Let him wait; everything would arrange itself. The poet had escaped a soldier's tyranny only to fall into the hands of a bourgeois who had never lived at the mercy of creditors.

The young man passed the rest of 1844 in a despair which paralyzed his will power: he had that foretaste of hell he pictured in "L'irréparable", which is dated for us by its self-pity:

> Hope, gleaming at the windows of the Inn,
> Is quenched for us, forever dead! . . .

There was truly no hope in the facts he was forced

to face: how could he, on an allowance of two hundred francs a month, pay back the twenty thousand francs he owed? To the antiquary Arondel alone he had signed notes for over twelve thousand francs. This claim he could have had legally reduced, as his mother did after he died, but a dandy cannot refuse to honor his own signature. Arondel was to become the specter of his life, pursuing him from lodging to lodging, forcing him to hide in closets until he withdrew, making him change his rooms twelve times in sixteen years.

It was in such desperate days that Baudelaire turned to debauch, for

> Wine in a sordid hovel can diffuse
> A pomp no palace knows:
> Evoke long peristyles in misty rows
> Of red or golden hues,
> As sunset gilds her cloud-built porticoes.
>
> And opium widens all : there is no bourn
> To its infinity :
> Moments grow hours, pleasures cease to be :
> Those dreary joys forlorn
> Vanquish the soul with sensual tyranny. . . .

Wine was an escape during that winter of hopelessness. Opium he had already tested in the Club des Haschischins, described by Gautier — a group of young Romanticists eager to experience all the sensations forbidden by bourgeois morality, who met in the chambers of an artist living in the Hôtel Pimodan. Baudelaire learned to take it in the form of laudanum too, as a sleeping potion. But opium

was no drug to use when life was a nightmare, he found, for the nightmare only continued in his purchased dream.

There was less risk in wine, since it gave only a stupor. And it was much easier to obtain; it could be had at every street corner. He could drink with Jeanne, who like all her race loved the joys of wine and its lethargy. Later he blamed himself for leading the girl, still in her 'teens, into habits which from both of them extracted a heavy penalty; but now wine was masked as the consoler whose ministrations he had celebrated in "L'âme du vin."

Perhaps wine was more than a consoler. He considered suicide more than once in that unhappy winter: why not "make a shroud of drink", like the workman who had murdered his wife in "Le vin de l'assassin"? . . . The coming of spring must have put an end to these fancies, for this idea of suicide was only played out as a drama: he stabbed himself lightly in the breast, at a café, was brought to the police station and then taken to his mother's house.

The letters show that this tragic farce was performed at the end of June, 1845. The comedian got from it at least the *succès d'estime* he had intended, for his family authorized the payment of a portion of his debts, after which the young man again left his parents, because "they drank only Bordeaux wine and he could not do without Burgundy."

This heartless speech masked a dire necessity: Baudelaire knew that henceforth he must depend upon his Muse if he was ever to be free:

O Muse I love, whom palaces delight,
When at thy door the winds of winter cry,
Wilt have, when snowy eves in boredom die,
One ember left for feet benumbed and white? . . .

Wilt warm thy cold blue shoulders in the light
The moon bestows through shutters left awry?
Or climb, with empty mouth and purse, the sky,
To glean the gold from azure depths of night?

Thou must, to earn thy daily bread, employ
A well-swung censer, like a choir-boy,
And chant *Te Deum*, though with heart unstirred,

Or, starving zany, bare thy lovely breast
And flaunt thy laughter filled with tears unguessed,
To rouse the bilious humor of the herd.

He must get to work at once, and he felt that as a poet it was better to defer his début until he could give it the force of "a thunderbolt." So he began with art criticism, which was more practical because every great Paris newspaper and review had to take some account of the exhibitions of paintings which were constantly occurring. And his season of pure dilettantism had given him a good preparation for writing such articles.

Even in his student days he had visited and studied the Paris galleries. From 1842 to 1845, according to Prarond, he was as much interested in painting as in poetry: "I followed him sometimes to the Louvre, which he would rarely pass without entering. At that time he preferred to stop in the Spanish galleries. He had his infatuations for certain painters, was much attracted by a Tococopuli; he would go

in and see two or three pictures, and then leave. I don't need to mention his admiration for Delacroix." Champfleury too remembered these visits to the Louvre and the poet's love for Bronzino.

It is easy to see why Baudelaire admired the Spanish masters with their vigorous and somber color and their scenes of torture and martyrdom. Goya, with Delacroix, are the two painters reserved for the climax of the superb series depicted in "Les phares":

> Goya, who in a nightmare-horde unfurls
> Hags boiling fœtuses in witches' milk,
> Beldames before the glass, and naked girls
> For demon-lovers tightening hose of silk;
>
> And thou, O Delacroix, — dark lake of blood,
> Haunted by angels lost, 'neath angry skies,
> Where faery horns, across the emerald wood,
> Roll, as a strain from Weber chokes and dies;
>
> These curses, blasphemies, complaints, — these waves
> Of tears or ecstasy, prayers voiced or dumb,
> These echoes coming from a thousand caves,
> Hold, for Man's heart, a heavenly opium!
>
> Theirs is a cry a thousand sentinels
> Repeat with trumpets in a thousand moods;
> A thousand beacons set on citadels,
> A hail from hunters lost in pathless woods!
>
> For truly, 'tis the mightiest voice our souls
> Possess, O Lord, to prove their worth to Thee:
> This ardent sob that down the ages rolls,
> And breaks against thy verge, Eternity!

The painters of the past were his beacons. Their works gave him the opium that knew no sordid

reaction, but on the contrary stimulated his Muse. For the most cursory reader of "Les Fleurs du mal" will note the number of poems that are clearly suggested by pictures or statues.[1]

He made his début in the "Salon de 1845", a pamphlet which fills 76 pages in "Curiosités esthétiques." The book astonished Baudelaire's friends by the work it represented, and the public by its bold criticism and forceful style. One easily sees why it did not first appear in a Paris newspaper! Full of comparisons, it shows the range of the critic's background, but it keeps chiefly to details except at the end and voices no general ideas that are not better stated in its successor, the "Salon de 1846."

This larger booklet shows Baudelaire's reaction to approval in its more confident tone. Its dedication is however a voluntary attempt to compromise with a hated reality. The critic avers that the bourgeois cannot do without art, for "art is a beverage that refreshes and warms, and reëstablishes the digestion and the mind in the natural equilibrium of the ideal. . . . It is therefore to you, O bourgeois, that this book is naturally dedicated: for any book that does not address itself to the majority — in number and intelligence, is a stupid book." The dandy bends the knee to Demos and Mammon, but how ironically!

It was from the painter Delacroix, whom Baudelaire met at this time, that he got most of his ideas on art. He begins by praising creative criticism:

[1] See "Baudelaire and the Arts", by L. Piaget Shanks, in *Modern Language Notes*, November, 1926.

"the best account of a picture might be a sonnet or an elegy." This is just what he had done with the old masters in "Les phares." The best criticism will be partial and filled with passion — Wilde said later that only an auctioneer can admire all schools of art — but this criticism should open new horizons. The critic will ask the artist to be individual, naïve, sincere and sure of his technique; if he has no temperament he is not worthy to paint. For painting is the beautiful expressed by the artist's feeling, passion or reverie, and since the arts express different aspects of the absolute, criticism is always close to metaphysics.

Then the critic defines Romantic painting. To him, Romanticism does not consist in the subjects chosen, or in "local color"; but in the artist's manner of feeling; he considers Romanticism "the most up-to-date expression of the beautiful. . . . It is the art of modernity, *i. e.*, intimacy, spirituality, color, aspiration toward the infinite, expressed by all the means that the arts contain." Romanticism is full of color because born of longings aroused under gray Northern skies: the South is naturalistic, since in the South Nature leaves nothing for men to desire.

Next he comes to the rôle of color in painting. The long and patient analysis which follows is meant to explain to an untutored public the genius of Delacroix, so epic in his contrasted harmonies, but despised at that time because his sketchy drawing seemed incompetent beside the "tight" pictures of David and his school. Ingres, the great rival of

Delacroix, was the chief exponent of this academic group, which first covered its canvases with a meticulous outline drawing, and then colored each space up to these sharp clear lines. To-day the artist usually omits the charcoal or pencil outline and begins with a color-filled brush to "spot in" the masses: he really sketches in color. The importance of Delacroix lies partly in this new attitude which he initiated; and the importance of Baudelaire in the history of modern art lies in this evidence of his clear vision. He is the greatest French critic of painting except Fromentin.

For Baudelaire, color has harmony, melody and counterpoint. He describes a landscape vibrant in the mounting radiance of the sun; the blue infinity of the sea, the green of the trees, relieved by red poppies or parrakeets, for "red chants the glory of green", while the blue above softens and changes the colors and outlines of all beneath. As the day advances tones mingle and reflections appear, tones change in value under the moving sun, but remain in harmony by what they take from each other. Shadows change their places and become glazed with new tones through the influence of reflected colors. Sunset ends the symphony of day in blood-red harmonies on the sea, and the greens are flushed with royal red. It is a landscape limned to show the rôle of color in painting, but its red parrakeets make it a landscape of the tropics.

Not less personal is the next paragraph, which proves the opposition — visible under a microscope — between the reds and blue-greens in a

woman's hand. "A woman somewhat full-blooded, thin and thin-skinned" — one easily divines that the subject was Jeanne Duval. In the palm of his divinity, "brown as the night", Baudelaire found beneath his glass "a perfect harmony of grays, blues, browns, greens, warm yellows and whites warmed by a little yellow" — a harmony which, combined with shadows, produces the colorist's modeling, so different from the draughtsman's. Color, then, which is "the agreement of two tones, a warm and a cold", cannot be defined absolutely; colors have only a relative existence.

"The magnifier is the colorist's eye."

Colors therefore melt into each other, and the artist must study Nature's counterpoint in her color schemes, never faulty because in life color and form are one, and even buildings crudely painted by man find their ugly tones softened by the atmosphere which enwraps and marries all. Nothing in a painting is really colored as in nature, if viewed closely.

It follows that falsehoods are necessary even in realistic art — a truth not yet commonplace in 1846 — that melody is unity in color, with all effects helping the general effect; that one must judge the "melody" of a painting by its meaning for, or its effect upon, the memory, when seen from a distance too great for one to understand the subject at all; that style and feeling in color depend upon the artist's temperament, which makes his color his own: calm and gay in Veronese, often "plaintive" in Delacroix.

Like his hero Samuel Cramer, Baudelaire then asserts the possibility of devising a comparative scale of colors and feelings, and he quotes from E. T. A. Hoffmann's "Kreisleriana" to show that the German writer perceived "an essential concordance between colors, sounds and perfumes." Hoffmann felt that "they were all begotten by the same ray of light", and when he breathed the odor of red or brown nasturtiums he seemed to hear afar off the grave deep note of an oboe.

Baudelaire's symbolism and the whole school of poetry he originated grew out of that passage, which his imagination combined with memories of Swedenborg in the famous sonnet "Correspondances":

> A temple where from every corridor
> Live pillars oft obscurely call to us,
> Nature's a grove of symbols tyrannous
> That watch us pass with eyes we knew before.
>
> As trailing echoes blend within a bond
> Of harmony, deep, shadowy, withdrawn,
> Vast as the night or as the fire of dawn,
> Fragrance and sound and color correspond.
>
> Some fragrances are cool as children's brows,
> Mellow as oboes, green as grassy leas. . . .

Like fragrances and sounds, colors also are able to express infinity. Baudelaire's nerves, tuned to perceive the analogies between these different impressions which all voice the Universal Analogy of Beauty, — nerves quick to feel the differences in temperament shown in an artist's color — can sense the

mystical infinite which underlies Romantic painting and makes it break with the cold sculptural school of David and Ingres. Romantic painters are "epic poets", and their great exemplar is Eugène Delacroix.

Baudelaire would place this master even before Hugo, and make him the standard bearer of Romanticism; because it is he and not Hugo whose work "opens great highways to the most roving imagination." By his understanding of his subject, he is able, even better than the poet, to "tear out its very vitals." Hugo with his superficial imagery had become a painter-poet: Delacroix by respecting his own inner ideal is often unconsciously a poet-painter.

But Delacroix is always a conscious artist. "There are no chances in art, any more than in mechanics", says Baudelaire: "a picture is a mechanism whose every operation is intelligible to the practised eye, a thing in which every detail has its *raison d'être*, in which one tone brings out another, and even a fault in drawing may sometimes be needed so as not to sacrifice more important things." And he justifies the painter he loves by quoting Heine: "In art I am a supernaturalist. I believe that the artist cannot find all his types in nature —that the most striking ones are revealed to him in his soul . . . and revealed all in one flash." This is pure Plotinus.

"So Delacroix starts out with this principle, that a picture must first of all reproduce the intrinsic thought of the artist, who dominates his model as the Creator does his creation. . . . For Eugène Delacroix, Nature is a vast dictionary", but only

a dictionary; his art is "an art of the memory which speaks most clearly to the memory." His picture "Dante and Virgil in Hell" leaves an impression whose intensity grows with the lapse of time; this explains why he sacrifices detail, and "fears to weaken the vitality of his thought by the weariness of a clearer, more calligraphic execution . . . ." No modern could better justify neglect of drawing, the reproach the public then hurled at Delacroix.

There is passion in this artist's paintings, continues Baudelaire, and "we must accept the fatality of a talent and not haggle with genius." If Delacroix has no sculptural line, his figures move and his draperies wave. For the colorists, "who wish to imitate the never-ending palpitation of Nature, lines are but the intimate fusion of two colors", and the chief quality of drawing is truthfulness to movement.

Delacroix is thus related to the great tradition of painting. He is a great painter because he has no specialty, but like Rubens, is capable of treating any material, even the painting of Catholicism, "that religion of universal sorrow." He understands landscape, and can give to it the calm of Fénelon's first scene in "Télémaque." It is his melancholy, found especially in his women, that makes him the great poet of the nineteenth century. "His melancholy, lofty and serious, shines with dull splendor even in his color . . . plaintive and profound as Weber's melodies." One remembers the quatrain in "Les phares."

And finally, Delacroix is a master of dramatic

quality, of gestures tragic and expressive. "Because of this quality, absolutely modern and absolutely new, Delacroix is the last expression of progress in art. Heir of the great tradition, of its amplitude, nobility and pomp in composition, a worthy successor of the old masters, he adds to their qualities his mastery of suffering, his passion and his gestures. . . . What if he makes mistakes? . . . We know that great geniuses are never half wrong; they have the privilege of being enormous in all things."

We should not quote so largely from the many pages given to Delacroix if they did not deal with the very qualities of Baudelaire's art of verse. He too puts into his poems a mysticism of the sensations, if we may call it that; and consideration of his color adjectives is very interesting. In his poems he uses mostly red and black; but all his color notations are fewer than his blacks and his whites, if with them we place words indicating shade and shadow, and, more numerous than all his touches of gloom, the flashes of light or fire to which his soul aspired. So his art is the art of the etcher, who enlivens his plates by contrasted high lights and vivid bits of sanguine.

Like Delacroix, Baudelaire sacrifices outline to color; like him he employs color to depict passion, and paints his pictures by contrasting tones. Baudelaire too is a conscious artist, master of his technique, choosing his vowel and consonant harmonies to suggest atmosphere. Like Delacroix he is a painter of suffering, a somber idealist, using nature

but not copying it, evoking to memory an art conceived in his memory, an art melancholy and tragically dramatic and modern, despite its inheritance of the great tradition of the seventeenth century.

All criticism is in a way a portrait of the critic. So we must note Baudelaire's dislikes: his antipathy to Ingres' drawing, which engenders in him the tension and suffering in which it was born; his hatred of the great official painter of the day, the too facile Horace Vernet. "Vernet is a soldier who does painting. . . . I hate that man because his pictures are not art. . . . Vernet is the perfect antithesis of the artist: he creates Meissoniers as big as the world!"

Time has ratified Baudelaire's decisions and made his pages prophecies, as he himself said concerning his judgment of Delacroix. The eclectics, who "lack a passion" and whose works "leave no memory behind" are forgotten, together with the sentimentalists who confuse poetry and art by trying to tell a story. The "apes of sentiment" require a catalogue and a title, which is often misleading. "A poor spinner" might be a woman, a silkworm or a caterpillar crushed by a child, because "*cet âge est sans pitié.*"

Baudelaire too is without pity for bad artists. "I would rather let Time do its work than waste mine." He too is a child in his exuberance, mocking at the French tragedy in which the heroes never eat, proposing to hang Meissonier's microscopic paintings on the frieze of the lofty Gymnase, laughing

at the type of literature "which preaches the virtue of assassins and streetwalkers," shouting his hatred of the army, of Lyons with its commercialism and bigotry, his hatred of the Frenchman, *le Français né vaudevilliste* and more fearful of the Sublime than of a street riot!

Nothing could be more subjective than this. Nothing could be more subjective than his preferences, his love of genuinely exotic pictures, his delight in Théodore Rousseau's landscapes, landscapes of the North, filled with deep melancholy. "He loves scenes tinged with blue, twilights, singular rain-drenched sunsets. . . ." — Baudelaire too in his verses loves angry sunsets, blue twilights, horizons drowned in mist or flaming in sunlight from a ruffled sky. And he concludes: "There is magic in Rousseau, for he is a naturalist incessantly attracted toward the ideal."

Like Rousseau, Baudelaire is always attracted toward the ideal, and for him it includes all forms of beauty. He asks his readers to compare with the cacophonous diversity of any modern exhibition the effect produced by a gallery of old masters, in which even children instinctively doff their hats, touched by the profound idealistic unity of the great tradition. But he would not have modern artists copy the Past, because "apes are the republicans of art" who borrow external qualities in the name of an anarchical liberty.

Besides, our modern life has its epic side, its beauty, which comes from the passions, and that

beauty is not destroyed by modern dress, no matter how the apes of classical and Biblical subjects may protest: it subsists despite the black coats which make men look like undertakers. "We are all wearing mourning for some death", but this mourning, this badge of modern equality, has its own elegance; and "a great colorist can create color with evening clothes, a white cravat and a gray background." Whistler surely read this, and profited.

Modern life has its beauty, and any newspaper will show that it has also its heroic side. "The life of Paris is fruitful in poetic and marvellous subjects. The supernatural surrounds us, overwhelms us like the atmosphere, but we do not see it. . . . The materials and the subjects of painting are no less abundant than in the past, no less varied, and there is a new element, which is the beauty of modernity."

"For the heroes of the Iliad stand no higher than your ankles, O Vautrin, O Rastignac, O Birotteau . . . no higher than yours too, O Honoré de Balzac, the most heroic, the most singular, the most Romantic and poetic character of all those you have drawn out of your heart!"

All criticism is a portrait of the critic. And this portrait represents Baudelaire more sincerely than "Les Fleurs du mal", where, as the very title hints, the real portrait is wreathed, like an etcher's plate, with monsters meant for an age debauched by Romanticism. As for a complete portrait, one must read all of Baudelaire to sketch it even in outline.

The success of the "Salons" did not save their author from the literary Bohemia he had scorned at twenty. One may be too brilliant, too flippant toward authority to impress the old and conservative editors who dispose of the fattest purses. At twenty-five the poet was already living a life of wretched expedients.

"At that time he had two domiciles," says his friend Toubin, who was later to join with him in a journalistic venture: "but when his bills and notes fell due he used to come and ask hospitality of me. . . . More than one of the pieces of "Les Fleurs du mal" were composed, or at least jotted down on paper in our rooms. Baudelaire had the habit of composing in cafés or as he walked the streets. At the café his usual drink was white wine." According to Toubin he would often invite himself to meals; and then, when he had received his six hundred francs for the next three months, give two or three dinners to the friends who had helped him during the previous quarter. He borrowed all he could from the Authors' Society to which he belonged: his letters always mention an article about to be published, as if the treasurer would credit a mere hope as his security.

The "Salon de 1845" was written in a café, where he led his newly made friend Asselineau — then

also "doing" a *Salon* — and ordered white wine and clay pipes: he loved tobacco as much as wine. And in such places he probably wrote his first literary articles or book reviews for the *Corsaire-Satan*, a minor liberal journal which accepted his early work.

His friend and former schoolmate Louis Ménard had published, under a pseudonym, a philosophical poem, "Prométhée délivré." This work of a possible rival Baudelaire reviewed with cocksure brutality, blaming Ménard for putting an evident philosophic intention into his poetry, as he had scored the sentimentalists for confusing poetry and painting. Instead of allowing his reader to draw a moral, Ménard had created "a protestant poem", a poem of protest; and that intention had doubly disgusted Baudelaire, who believed in Art untrammeled and had no faith in progress. Delimiting the separate fields of art and philosophy before he came in contact with Poe, he was at heart enough of a Catholic to feel no sympathy for Prometheus, so dear to the Romantic poets because he was the incarnation of man's revolt against heaven.

The author of "Prométhée délivré" took the review amiss. But Baudelaire was after all only to blame for his impertinent manner toward a former schoolmate. He was quick to praise the tales of another collaborator on the staff of the *Corsaire-Satan*, Champfleury. This article contains an incidental eulogy of the author of the "Comédie humaine": Balzac's methods in literary creation are "alone worthy of study", he asserts, and it is easy

to see how he profited by reading the great Romantic visionary.

Perhaps this admiration for the genius was meant to offset a criticism of the man which he had made in a minor review during 1846. "Comment on paie ses dettes quand on a du génie" is a comic portrait of the always impecunious Balzac, who is depicted sadly pacing the boulevard and considering how he can meet an obligation. A bright idea occurs to him and he calls upon a newspaper editor, after which he is seen to visit Gautier and Ourliac, whose pens are far less highly paid. From them he orders the articles he has promised, which he will copy and sell as his own!

In this incident, as in the review of Ménard's poem, one can read envy and egotism. Baudelaire was as yet little known, but he was conscious of his genius despite four years of editorial rebuffs. He felt that he was no timid beginner, but already a veteran man of letters. And it was as a veteran that this young man of twenty-five exhorted his younger brothers-at-arms, a bit patronizingly, in his "Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs."

For he is young and his advice shows it; he is optimistic and full of energy. There is no such thing as bad luck for a writer: he must displace the chain of circumstances drawn around him by discovering its weak points. Again we see Balzac's stamp in this glorification of the will and denial of Destiny, for which Baudelaire's later life might seem to be an atonement. Balzacian too is his admiration for

force: the aspirant must attain in his own genre the concentrated interest that Eugène Sue displays in his penny-shocker novels. Nothing is true except force; force is the highest justice, he adds, in mockery of the arguments which preceded the Revolution of 1848.

The young writer must think of nothing but his art. To write quickly he should carry his subject around with him, think of it during his walks, in his bathtub, at his restaurant or café. He must have finished his whole canvas in his head before he sets pen to paper; otherwise he loses unity in sentences and in the whole work. A classicist could give no better advice to Romanticists who blindly trusted inspiration.

But Baudelaire carries still farther his revolt against Romantic notions concerning the means of attaining inspiration. He forbids all orgies because they do not stimulate; good food and the habit of daily work will alone secure results. The budding author must have no creditors either, unless purely imaginary ones: genius and disorder do not go together. No dangerous women, no intrigues with married ladies, actresses or blue-stockings: a legitimate wife or the favors of the priestesses of Venus. For the artist needs woman as a relaxation, at those moments when his overwrought nerves make him hate his writing. — All that Baudelaire says about debts and orgies shows what he truly thought of the precarious life Murger described, and which he had unhappily come to know.

These articles, except the review of Champfleury,

were evidently done in 1846, together with the "Salon" and perhaps "La Fanfarlo." Two of his poems, "A une Malabaraise" and "Don Juan aux enfers" were also published in *L'Artiste*. In 1847 Champfleury quoted in a novel another poem given to him by Baudelaire, "Les chats."

It was not a bad start, considering the poems held in reserve for possible improvements. But as Baudelaire was always interested in ideas, he could not resist the temptations of politics. He was too emotional to sit apart, among the wrangling students and littérateurs who filled the cafés in 1847, just before the fall of Louis-Philippe. The Latin Quarter was full of incendiary speech, and no one could live there and escape that conflagration.

It mattered not that he had hated the republicans as "the natural enemies of Raphael", that he still hated them because their doctrines made no place for the fine arts; despite himself he was swept away by the torrent, with his comrades Ménard, Leconte de Lisle and Dupont. First he yielded to the vogue in his dress only, donning a red cravat and a republican blouse like the rest of them. But his was a blouse cut by a good tailor, and beneath it he wore black trousers with straps, maintaining a proper line over patent-leather Romeo slippers.

To wear a uniform is sooner or later to adopt the spirit of one's fellow soldiers. Why should one think of consistency at twenty-six? Baudelaire was against the existing order because he had suffered from it. He was overwrought by his tortures at the

hands of Jeanne and his creditors, by too much café life, by drugs first taken to quiet his nerves and make him forget the goal that haunted him — drugs which had finally become a necessity. He joined the liberals.

That his life since 1842 had much to do with this reaction is proved by his letters to his mother. With his fortune tied up, he was constantly on the road to Neuilly to see Ancelle. He could not even get fuel for the winter without enduring a lengthy scolding. To avoid this he borrowed from all his friends, and eked out each month by appeals to his mother. He had to move when his creditors discovered each new address, and flee to another filthy lodging house. He had been ill, and he had several times passed the night in the prison for debtors.

Once, he had even considered leaving Paris and his ambitions and returning to Mauritius, to take a place as tutor in the family of the lovely Creole; he knew "the horrible ennui and the intellectual degeneration of the tropics", but was ready to accept this slow suicide if his mother failed to answer. Clearly she had refused to see him, and he speaks of certain "cruel letters" she had written him in 1847, when he was in prison for his debts.

Baudelaire's reaction against such things made him a radical at twenty-six: he merely obeyed the impulse of exasperated nerves. A fiery revolt exploded in the young dandy who had six years before tried to live before his mirror, curbed by his scorn of cheap ideals. The purely nervous and unreasoned nature of his

mood — a paroxysm which freed all his repressions — may be seen in Buisson's story of Baudelaire's part in the first insurrections of 1848:

"On the evening of the 24th of February I met him at the Carrefour de Buci, in the midst of a mob which had just sacked a gunsmith's shop. He was carrying a fine double-barrelled gun, new and shining, and a superb yellow cartridge-belt, also immaculate. I hailed him, and he came toward me, pretending great excitement:

" 'I have just taken part in the shooting,' he said. And I smiled, looking at his brand-new arsenal: 'Not for the republic, by any chance?' He did not reply, but continued to shout his refrain: 'We must go and shoot General Aupick!' Never had I been so painfully struck by the lack of character in that personality so delicately poised and so original." Baudelaire had probably been drinking heavily.

Once launched in the torrent of the Revolution, however, he was only logical when he joined Champfleury and Toubin in founding a revolutionary journal, *Le Salut Public*. The three editors wrote their articles in the Café de la Rotonde, but as nothing was signed we cannot distinguish Baudelaire's share in them. One apostrophe however — "Are we not to-day greater than Brutus?" — recalls his thesis on the heroic quality of modern life.

This heroic and picturesque side of the Revolution had much to do with Baudelaire's Romantic madness, for he always dealt with life as a "generous gambler", and long before Nietzsche, put in practice

his maxim: *Live dangerously*. The journal perished with the second number but his enthusiasm endured: he took part in the June battles. Le Vavasseur saw him, "nervous, feverishly agitated", declaiming loudly in a café over the arrest of a friend. "Was it because his hands smelled of powder? Smell mine!" This time too he was probably intoxicated, because their efforts to calm him failed, and if he escaped it was due to his luck and the fact that the National Guardsman present was a friend of his. But Le Vavasseur comments upon his bravery.

Bravery or recklessness? Because about this time he challenged Armand Barthet to a duel, which was averted by the seconds. He was reckless because he felt he was now "abandoned" in Paris by her who had made herself responsible by perpetuating his legal and moral dependence; he lost his last anchor when his mother left with General Aupick for Constantinople, where the soldier served his country for two years as ambassador.

The General had evidently objected to his wife's sending money that found its way into the hands of Jeanne, for Baudelaire wrote Aupick in December:

"With that high-strung obstinacy and violence which is peculiar to you, you were unjust to me, solely on account of a poor woman whom *for a long time now I have loved only from a sense of duty*. . . . You have failed to understand this singular liaison, in which I have nothing to gain, and in which expiation and a desire to repay devotedness play the chief part. However numerous a woman's infidelities

may be, however hard her character, if she has shown a few sparks of good will and self-sacrifice, that is enough to make an unselfish man — and especially a poet — feel that he is obliged to recompense her." It must have been gratifying to be able to preach to a former monitor.

The General had probably objected that his liaison kept him out of "honorable society", for Baudelaire replies that since he is twenty-eight and still ambitious to be a poet, he is separated forever from honorable society by his tastes and his principles. Money had no doubt been offered him on condition that he drop Jeanne, which he refused to do. He was, however, willing to borrow two hundred and fifty francs, since he needed to redeem certain manuscripts left with a landlady as a guarantee. The General did not help him to redeem these manuscripts, the importance of which will soon appear.

At the close of his letter Baudelaire voices his desire to go to Constantinople some day — a desire explained by the pressure of creditors as well as by his wish to see his mother and an exotic country. It was probably the question of debts that sent him a year later to Dijon, where we find him December 3, 1849, — ill with a return of his old malady, taking laudanum rather than working, and planning budgets of his future earnings whereby he could satisfy his creditors and go back to Paris. From these estimates we see that he probably earned about twelve hundred francs (two hundred and forty dollars) in his most prolific year so far, 1846.

Jeanne came to join him at Dijon in January, 1850, after an interview with Ancelle which made the poet tell the notary to treat her with more respect. But her conversation was not enough for the exile and he soon returned to his beloved boulevards.

This period of Baudelaire's life is very obscure because there are so few letters. Did he, before or after his trip to Dijon, go to Châteauroux to edit a republican newspaper, astonish the concierge by calling for "the brandy of the editorial staff", the good ladies of the city by bringing with him his "favorite" Jeanne, and his subscribers by an editorial beginning: "When Marat, that man of gentleness, and Robespierre, that man of implacable virtue, demanded, one 300,000 heads, and the other the permanent establishment of the guillotine, they were merely obeying the inexorable logic of their system"? It is true that an article has been discovered which sounds a similar note but does not contain this sentence, possibly deleted by higher authority. Most revolutionary writing has the same sadistic violence; otherwise one could well believe the legend. By such disconcerting stories Baudelaire made himself the Mephisto of the Latin Quarter.

What is certain is that his revolutionary ardor did not long blind him to the consequences of real revolution. At Dijon he saw how the peasantry would interpret socialism, stupidly and brutally, to justify wholesale destruction; and his logic was like a pail of cold water to a young republican orator who visited him there. Years afterward in Belgium

he liked to think, by a self-deception which covered his regrets, that he had not yielded to impulse. "But I was never a dupe! I said: Long live the Revolution just as I would say: Hurrah for Destruction, Expiation, Punishment and Death!" This shows how he used the Catholic ideas of his beloved Joseph de Maistre to justify himself.

At the end of 1851 he gave to a republican almanac his poem "L'âme du vin", and even let his name be printed as the one responsible for the pamphlet. But when the *coup d' état* came he was disgusted with the nation that had permitted it, and did not vote in the election of 1852. "The second of September has given me a physical revulsion from politics; general ideas have ceased to exist." And when his blood cooled he wrote in his diary:

"POLITICS: I have no convictions . . . because I have no ambition. There is a certain cowardice or rather a certain softness in gentlemen. Brigands alone have convictions, — of what? Of the fact that they must succeed. So they do succeed. Why should I do so, since I haven't even the desire to attempt it? And yet I have a few convictions, in a loftier sense, which the men of my day cannot understand."

This marks the awakening from a debauch, an intellectual debauching of his real beliefs. Baudelaire called it just that: "*Mon ivresse de 48.*" He was puzzled by his sadistic rebellion, and in his diaries tried to find its causes in a desire for vengeance, in memories of his reading, in a natural pleasure in destruction — "a legitimate taste, if all that is natural is

legitimate." He notes cynically: "I can see how some men can desert a cause so as to find out what they would experience in serving another." But his "*ivresse*" lasted till 1852 since he admits: "My fury at the *coup d' état*. How many gunshots I escaped! Another Bonaparte! What a humiliation!"

Ended, now, was his dream of freedom from debts, in that Revolution which "was only amusing because every one was building Utopias, like castles in Spain." At thirty-one Baudelaire woke up to reality, at least in so far as a dreamer and a neurotic can.

Castles in Spain should only be built in the realm of art or letters. And Baudelaire turned back to literature, impelled by a greater passion than revolution or love could give. A few years before he had chanced upon an account of the work of Edgar Allan Poe.

That was in 1846. He at once began to collect Poe's stories, many of which were available only in the magazines where they had first appeared. He borrowed files of these magazines from Americans in Paris. "And then I found, believe me if you will" — he writes to Armand Fraisse — "poems and short stories that I had already had an idea of, but vague and confused, ideas which Poe had managed to put together and give perfection to."

One can hardly doubt that it was Poe's example no less than Balzac's which had since 1846 made

him dream of writing novels — a vain project for a genius so subjective. When he went to Dijon he had this dream, and after the *coup d' ètat* he was more than ever determined to "apply metaphysics to the novel." He wasted years over this project, years taken from his other ambition, that of giving Poe to the French in their own language. For although he had translated and published "Mesmeric revelation" in July, 1848, it was not until 1854 that he began to publish continuously his translations of the other tales.

These years were spent in learning English, which he had largely forgotten, and in planning stories which on paper never got beyond the titles. They are titles such as might be conceived by one who hoped to equal the combined horrors of Eugène Sue and Poe. "The End of the World" was to be a pessimistic picture of the last men reduced to the level of brutes; "The Reasonable Madman", a sadistic picture of the natural man. "The Virgin Mistress" was to set forth his theories of love; "Heads or Tails" was to concern the discovery of a conspiracy that would ruin the Empire. "The Fatal Portrait" involved a lost will and a deduction made in order to find it. Poe's influence is plain enough in the last.

It is hard to see how some of these plans could have been given a literary form. Yet he speaks of them constantly in his letters, and in his diary gives a recipe for beginning a novel: "Conceive a canvas for a lyrical or fairy extravaganza, for a pan-

tomime," he writes, "and translate it into a serious novel. Drown the whole thing in an abnormal, dreamy atmosphere, in the atmosphere of one's *high days*. Let it be something lulling, with serenity in its passion. — The regions of pure poetry." What could this formula have given? Something like Poe's "Ligeia" or "Morella" perhaps. For Baudelaire it only helped him to write the "Poems in prose", many years later.

At this time his own life was too tragic for him to find leisure to pen a picture of the ideal. In the summer of 1851 he had "made up" with his mother as the General passed through Paris to his new post at London, soon exchanged because of the climate for the embassy at Madrid, and had enjoyed a few excursions and walks with her. But her good influence had to battle for months in his conscience with his habits of idleness and debauch and dependence upon drugs. This struggle is described in a sonnet he published in 1851, "La cloche fêlée":

There is a bitter joy, on cold and bare
December eves, while embers smoke their last,
To hear far memories mounting from the past
Slow as the slow chimes in the frosty air.

Blessed the flawless bell, of metal rare,
The full-toned bourdon, void of rift or rust,
That like a guardsman faithful to his trust
Hurls forth unfailingly his call to prayer!

My soul's a riven bell that timidly
Would fill the frozen night with melody,
But finds its voice is faltering and weak

As, over lakes of blood, a choking shriek
From one forgot 'neath mounds of dead, who lies
Moveless as they, though struggling till he dies.

And in the same year was printed his equally significant study "Du vin et du haschisch."

In 1852 he likened his brain to a "sick volcano"; he confessed that he was visited by "great storms" followed by "great visions of the dawn." This spiritual condition lends its incoherency to an important letter to his mother, written in March, 1852.

He sends her his latest articles, "Les drames et les romans honnêtes" and "L'école païenne." Both must have pleased her by their Catholic tone and their evidence of his ripening, if not of his reform. One can imagine her raising her eyebrows over the first, in which he "defies any one to find a single work of the imagination which is a pernicious work, if it bring together all the conditions of the Beautiful." If she read his elucubrations, which is not always certain, she certainly approved the second article, in which he turns against the fleshly school of writers, those who seek nothing but plastic beauty. "To surround oneself exclusively with the seductions of physical art is to create for oneself great chances of damnation." Physical beauty will banish reason from one's soul, but sin contains its own inferno. "The immoderate taste for form drives the artist into strange and monstrous disorders." The youthful rebel has matured, and the letter he sent with the articles shows it.

But the really important part of the letter begins

with his recommendation to her to look up, at Madrid, the *Revue de Paris* for March, 1852, which contained his first article on Poe. "I have discovered an American author who has aroused in me an incredible sympathy, and have written two articles on his life and works. They are written with ardor; you will certainly find in them a few lines of extraordinary excitation. That is the consequence of the life of suffering and folly that I am leading. . . . I am obliged to work at night, so as to have peace and avoid the intolerable tortures of the woman with whom I am living. Sometimes I run away from the house to be able to write, and go to a library or a wineseller's or a café, as I have done now. The result is a state of perpetual anger within me. Certainly it is not thus that one can write long books."

Having begun to translate Poe he was eager to go on with his work; his ambition was at last aroused. But he had been forced to write away from the house, without access to the books he needed. And his resentment toward Jeanne had therefore reached a climax. "To live with a creature who has no gratitude for your efforts, who opposes them by her constant stupidity and meanness, who looks upon you only as her servant and her property, with whom it is impossible to exchange a word about politics or literature, — a creature *who refuses to learn anything*, although you have yourself offered to give her lessons, a creature *who doesn't admire me*, and who even has no interest in my studies and

would throw my manuscripts into the fire if that would bring in more money than to let them be published." Comparing his lot to Poe's, he clearly realized his need of a maternal love like Mrs. Clemm's, who was wise enough to foster the pride that was her "pauvre Eddie's" mainspring of action.

Jeanne however opposed him at every point, driving his cat out of the house, bringing in dogs, whose noisy ways he detested, preventing him from working, although she knew that in a month he could finish enough translations to print a volume, which might make them rich. For instinct no less than experience taught her that his taxing labors were infidelities to her. And Baudelaire writes with "tears of rage" in his eyes:

"I am really glad that there is no weapon in the house; and I think of the times when it is impossible for me to obey reason, and of the awful night when I cut her head open with a candlestick. This is what I have found in her, instead of the consolation and repose that ten years ago I thought I should find. . . . I believe, and shall forever believe, that only the woman who has suffered and borne a child is man's equal. . . ."

He must leave her because his intellectual salvation is at stake. Honor commanded that he should first give her money. This honor, which he cynically calls vanity, had so far "prevailed over his suffering", keeping him chained. When his rancor had at last made him afraid of himself, he applied to his mother for a loan of a thousand francs, to satisfy

his obligations to Jeanne and provide himself with a new home. "I shall give her more money again later, several times . . . but I shall never see her again. I have used up ten years in that struggle. . . . All the illusions of my younger years have disappeared, and all I have left is a bitterness which will perhaps be everlasting."

Everlasting? As soon as he was relieved of his succuba, Baudelaire began to dream again, and his dreams took the color of the book of verses that was now his Bible. He met a model in some studio, for he was always intimate with artists — a woman who loved another; and like Rousseau with Madame d'Houdetot, he found that his heart caught fire from her confession. When she gave up posing so as to escape his courtship, he wrote her an extraordinary letter. It is a letter filled with erotic mysticism: before his closed eyes, he tells her, floats the vision of her eyes; he begs her to be his "Guardian Angel" his "Muse" and his "Madonna", and to lead him "in the Path of Beauty." The woman did not respond, but these images were to find a place in Baudelaire's verses, together with others borrowed from the poem from which they came, the longer "Stanzas to Helen." Edgar Poe, the dead poet whom he had just discovered, probably in the Griswold edition of 1851 (for it seems likely that before this he knew Poe only as a novelist), Poe, the spiritual brother who had first set him to work on a task independent of moods, was to leave his imprint on his new ideal of love.

Baudelaire had left Jeanne so as to devote himself to Edgar Allan Poe. And he soon found that it was easier to live with a dead master than with a living mistress.

"I am accused, *I*, of imitating Poe," he wrote in a letter of 1864. "Do you know why I so patiently translated Poe? Because he resembled me. The first time I opened a book by him, I saw with terror and delight not merely subjects that I had dreamed of, but *sentences*, which I had thought of, and he had written twenty years before. . . ."

All the things that had remained inarticulate within him — unexpressed because he was a Latin educated to see and to write in the Latin school of reason and clarity — all the musical vagueness and power of suggestion he had craved for his style, he found in Poe: misty landscapes, exotic women, depicted with an art less plastic and logical than his, an art nearer to music than to painting, an art that swept the imagination onward, made one dream, opened up a new realm of vaporous, indefinite beauty.

And he had only to translate him. To translate him was to explain himself, justify himself, present himself to the public behind a mask which resembled him like a brother, and which was none the less not he. "I *must* make, that is, I *want* to make Edgar

Poe, who is not much in America, a great man in France," he wrote to Sainte-Beuve later. He wished to reveal Poe to France, because he had found in Poe's genius a spiritual rehabilitation.

Poe justified him: this is the motive which we read clearly in Baudelaire's study of the American and his works, published in Maxime DuCamp's recently founded *Revue de Paris*, in March and April, 1852.[1]

He strikes the note on the very first page of his article: "There are destinies oppressed by fatality; there exist in the literature of every country men who bear the word Luckless written in mysterious characters on the sinuous wrinkles of their foreheads. . . . Society strikes them with an individual anathema, and against them uses as arguments vices of character which its own persecution has given them." He quotes the cases of Hoffmann, Balzac and others: "this or that man, whose somber despairing genius frightens you, was cast *with premeditation* into an environment hostile to him." And such fatalities he seems to ascribe to the Devil, who enters shut doors through the keyhole.

Thus for Baudelaire the pages of "William Wilson", describing Poe's school life at Stoke-Newington, exhale a "black fragrance." "Of course," he adds, "Edgar Poe did not experience the hours spent in school prisons, the malaise of a sickly and abandoned childhood, the fear of our enemy the teacher — all the tortures of adolescence." Here the critic is

[1] See the Mercure de France edition of the "Œuvres posthumes" for this study, which Baudelaire revised in 1856 and used as preface for his translations when they came out in book form.

gazing into his own mirror, as he also does when he attributes to Poe, even in his childhood, a certain delectation in suffering. "He foresees that suffering will be the inseparable companion of his future life, and he calls her to him with a lustful persistency." It would seem that the danger of criticism is the danger of the Crystal Maze — that prison of reflected selves.

Baudelaire did, however, look sharply into Griswold's imputations. "American biographers are too good democrats not to hate their great men." He hates Americans, many of whom he had interviewed to get help for his translations; he hates America, which is for him "a vast cage" hemming in the poet, "a great banking establishment"; four years later he will say, "a great gaslit Barbaria." One remembers Baudelaire's opinion of Lyons; later he judged Paris much as he had judged America. Poets are not perhaps the best exponents of cosmopolitanism.

On the other hand Baudelaire's love and admiration for Mrs. Clemm are too exuberant not to be an indirect criticism of his own mother. For it was to Mrs. Clemm that he intended to dedicate these tales, when they were published in book form. "May our tears traverse the Atlantic, the tears of all the unfortunate, of every one like thy poor Eddie, whom poverty and suffering have often dragged into debauch. . . . Thine image almost divine, will hover forever above the Martyrs' Book of literature."

Even in Baudelaire's physical portrait of Poe we have a certain reflection of himself. Poe was "a man

of distinction . . . marked by Nature, like those men who in a club or a café or in the street draw and preoccupy the observer's gaze." This partly explains the poses by which he turned to travesty his rôle of the French Poe, in the cafés of the Latin Quarter.

The eighteen-fifties still believed in phrenology, that pseudo-science which as a child Baudelaire had happened upon in his father's edition of Lavater. So he now submits his subject to a cranial analysis, proving his philosophic powers, his idealism, his pride, his lack of reverence and conventionality. He speaks of Poe's fondness for taverns and low companions, his sufferings from poverty and non-success, his debauches, — an escape from vulgar reality into his world of vision.

Poe's literary theories come next. For Baudelaire, Poe represents "almost entirely" the Romantic movement in America, but his Romanticism is a thing of more conscious artistry than Musset's or Lamartine's. He mentions "The Bells", "The Raven" and "Dreamland" as examples of his complicated art, then discusses some of the "Tales." "The Black Cat" particularly fascinates him, because it shows the spirit of perversity in man (to-day we call it the suggestibility or impulsivity of children and neurotics) — a thing from which he too has suffered, as we may see by his prose-poem "Le mauvais vitrier." He relates the story of Poe's epileptic heroine Berenice, whose teeth hypnotize her lover until he violates her bier to secure them. Once in a Paris café Baudelaire

startled a pretty *cocotte* by addressing her, in the metallic tones which he used to call attention to himself: "You, who are listening to me with such pretty teeth . . ."

The essay notes Poe's sobriety of detail, his love of the horrible — which is here explained as a reaction of his unoccupied energy, his chastity and his repressed sensibility. Baudelaire speaks of the fact that Poe does not write love stories or lachrymose pages, that he is constantly preoccupied with the ideal, with applying the methods of philosophy to literature, and glorifying the will in his inductions. For him, Poe's landscapes are dreams or abstractions, and they resemble his characters because both are shaken by "a galvanic supernatural shudder." Like Poe, Baudelaire considers strangeness a necessary element of beauty. In "Arthur Gordon Pym", he remarks, Poe tried to write a purely human story, but even there he delighted in terrible episodes: the encounter with the abandoned ship manned only by a corpse is cited in full, and when the gulls attack the body, one thinks of the horrible picture in Baudelaire's "Un voyage à Cythère."

The conclusion must be quoted:

"Every mystic has a hidden vice, often a very material one; for one man it is drunkenness, for another gluttony, for another lechery; one is miserly, another cruel, etc. My God . . . what then is this fatal law which enchains us, dominates us, and takes revenge on those who violate its intolerable despotism, by degrading and diminishing their

moral nature? The mystics have been the greatest of men. Why did they have to be punished for their greatness? . . . If a will to know the truth at all costs is a great crime, or can at least lead us into great faults . . . I think we ought to be very indulgent to those illustrious culprits, for . . . the same vice can be imputed to us all." Mystic or neurasthenic, Baudelaire voices an apologia for all errant seekers after beauty.

Hence he would put on Poe's tomb, for "all who aspire to the infinite and whose repressed feelings have been forced to seek a fearful solace in the wine of debauch" this adjuration: "Pray for him. . . . Now that his corporeal self is hovering in the midst of those beings whose existence he glimpsed, pray for him who sees and knows, and he will intercede for you." This explains the prayer Baudelaire set down on the last pages of his diary, invoking his father, his nurse Mariette and Poe as intercessors with God.

When he rewrote this essay on Poe's works for an introduction to his second volume of translations, Baudelaire largely suppressed this sentimentality, and stressed the importance of Poe as a conscious artist, master of a technique which always kept in mind the dénouement and the need of unity of tone. And he, like Poe, separated the realms of the Good, the Beautiful and the True, declaring that Beauty is a "*correspondance*" of heaven:

"Our insatiable thirst for everything that is beyond, and which life reveals, is the most living

proof of our immortality. It is both by poetry and *through* poetry, by and *through* music, that the soul glimpses the splendors which are behind the tomb; and when an exquisite poem brings tears to our eyes, those tears are not the proof of an excess of enjoyment, they are rather the evidence of an exasperated melancholy, a postulation of the nerves, on the part of a nature exiled in the imperfect, which would like to take immediate possession, on this very earth, of a revealed Paradise."

Baudelaire says nothing of Poe's tranquil deism, which was so great a difference between them. For if rebellion made him profess to be an atheist or at least a scoffer, he was still a Catholic by his belief in Satan, in the combat between Good and Evil which he felt within him.

He was still a Catholic in his ideas, as two other articles published the following year (1853) prove. In "La morale du joujou" he declares that not to give playthings to one's children smacks of Protestantism: parents so strict are like those "ultra-reasonable and anti-poetic people" he himself has suffered from, and who make his nerves quiver with hate. In "L'essence du rire" Catholic theology forms the basis of his theory of laughter.

"L'essence du rire" was destined later to furnish ideas to Bergson. It begins by citing an axiom which the author ascribes to Joseph de Maistre: "The sage cannot laugh without trembling." Indeed, de Maistre might have signed the essay, which holds it unchristian to yield to the mirth whose

cause is the misfortune of our neighbor. Laughter is a device of the Adversary, and to feel a sense of superiority in laughing is a sign of the Fall of Man. So Baudelaire had felt when he wrote the poem "L'héautontimoroumenos":

> . . . I am my heart's own vampire, for
> I walk alone, condemned, forlorn,
> By laughter everlasting torn,
> Yet doomed to smile, — ah, nevermore!

A temperament thus torn between heart and brain was well fitted to translate Poe. Here is the laughter that follows after tears, the hysterical laughter that comes from weak and jangled nerves. This is why Baudelaire's works resemble Poe's.

Poverty and neurasthenia alike made them brother-poets. Baudelaire had found the winter of 1852–1853 a season in purgatory. He had abandoned his lodgings in the autumn — as we have said — leaving in the hands of a screaming landlady "all his books and manuscripts, some completed, others begun." These manuscripts were his translations.

Ironic fortune then helped him to find a publisher, and he had contracted to deliver a volume of translations on the tenth of January. Lacking his manuscripts, he had vainly tried to borrow five hundred francs to redeem them. Then he had started a fresh translation, worked too fast and turned in copy so poorly done that when the proofs came he saw that he must make a new version, besides paying half

the cost of the useless typesetting to the publisher. "For three months I haven't dared write him or see him: the book lies on my table, interrupted." Finally in March he had appealed to his mother, writing "with frozen fingers before his last two logs." How he magnifies his misery for the only one before whom he could indulge in the supreme relief of self-pity! But all is not exaggeration, for he adds, "I am going to be prosecuted for a payment I had to make yesterday and at the end of the month I shall be prosecuted for another . . . I am guilty . . . but this strange disproportion between will and faculty is something I cannot understand. . . . With such a sharp clear notion of what my duty is, what the practical course is, why do I always do the opposite?"

Some of Poe's stories are no tonic for a debilitated will, as we know; at any rate, the book announced in 1852 did not appear until 1856. Yet the need of money might have spurred him on; it appears in nearly all his letters. For lack of it *La Semaine théâtrale*, the review he had founded with Champfleury, had died the winter before. Since 1847 he had published so little that in 1851 he had sent to *Le Messager de l'assemblée* eleven sonnets[1] drawn reluctantly from his portfolio, and, the next year, given Maxime DuCamp another ten for his *Revue de Paris*. Four of these sonnets lament or describe

[1] "Le mauvais moine", "L'idéal", "De profundis clamavi", "Les chats", "Les hiboux", "Le mort joyeux", "Le tonneau de la haine", "La cloche fêlée", "Pluviose irrité contre la ville entière", "La mort des amants" and "La mort des artistes."

his boredom and his apathy; in "Le tonneau de la haine" he shrieks out his hate; three poems invoke death, with a violence that denotes the sincerity of his aspiration:

> In dampest earth, where snails and slugs increase,
> Deep will I dig my dark and lonely grave,
> Where I can stretch mine ancient bones at ease
> And sleep, forgot like sharks beneath the wave. . . .
>
> O worms, my future comrades blind and dumb
> Freely and joyously to you I come;
> Wise little gourmands in corruption bred,
>
> Bore through my ruins then without remorse,
> And say, does further pain await this corpse,
> — This soulless corpse, now dead among the dead?

He always kept planning to work, to write the novels or plays that would perhaps free him from his creditors. The director of a prominent theater had suggested that he expand into a melodrama the murder related in "Le vin de l'assassin." The plot tempted him and he worked out a short scenario. But he could not write the play. He wrote instead the sonnet in which sterile artists long for death because they cannot write:

> We shall exhaust our soul and subtle brain
> And burst the bolts of many a tyranny,
> Ere we can gaze upon the God we see
> In dreams, and wake and sob and burn again!
>
> Some too have sought a Dream implacable,
> And now, accurst and branded rhapsodists,
> Go beating breast and brow with angry fists;

One hope is theirs, strange, darkling citadel!
Can Death's new sunlight, streaming o'er the tomb,
Allure the flower of their brains to bloom?

Despite this maddening sense of impotence, he speaks incessantly in his letters of the plays and novels he was "working" on. His imagination sustained his hope, despite all disillusions. Only a year before he had taken seriously the words of some rich acquaintance, probably in wine at the time, who spoke of founding a new review and paying all his debts so as to secure him as its editor. One of Baudelaire's pen sketches represents him embracing with covetous gaze a bag of gold, which soars on cherubic wings before his staring eyes.

He needed money for Jeanne who every morning came to his rooms with her demands. "She has made me suffer much, hasn't she, and how often!" — he writes his mother. "And how I complained of her to you a year ago! But facing such a ruin, so deep a melancholy, I feel my eyes full of tears, and, to confess all, my heart full of reproaches. Twice I have run through the money I got from her jewels, I have made her go in debt for me, sign notes for me; I have beaten her, and finally, instead of showing her how a man like me conducts himself, I have always set for her an example of debauchery and vagabondage. . . . Am I not guilty in that respect, as in all respects? . . .

"This abominable existence and my brandy [he means his laudanum] — which I am going to suppress — have upset my stomach for some months

back; and besides, I have unbearable attacks of nerves, just like a woman. . . .

"So you now understand why, in the midst of the awful loneliness that surrounds me, I was able to comprehend so well the genius of Edgar Poe, and why I described so well his abominable existence?"

At this time his mother was *ambassadrice*, at Madrid, distributing so much to the poor that her generosity got into the papers and he read of it there. But he knew that this was obligatory charity, and when in the summer of 1853 she returned to Paris, she found him working hard. He had promised her that he would "make his mind put on its Sunday best" and atone for six months of laziness. By 1854 his translations were appearing regularly in *Le Pays*, in small daily installments. His mother came to see him and encourage him, and he sent her a rare edition of Poe's verse.

But he still begs her incessantly for money. Now it is linen that he needs — which probably explains the winter overcoat and the protecting red and yellow muffler he wore when his biographer Crépet first met him, in June, 1854. His mother had little money to give now that the General was no longer ambassador. And she imposed a reconciliation. Her son even promised this: "if your husband isn't stupid; yes, I know all I have made you endure."

In August he asks for twenty francs, hoping that she can send it without anger, and explaining that the money is not for Arondel. He wants it to buy a few flowers for the anniversary of his friend Marie

[Daubrun?], an actress who "spends her nights sitting up with her dying parents, after she has played her stupid five acts." Marie was probably "la froide Marguerite" of the "Sonnet d'automne"; Baudelaire was now intriguing to get her into a better troupe.

He had other cares and interruptions: as his fame increased, more and more callers came. Hence he left his key in the spring-lock of his door, so that they could enter without disturbing his work on his manuscript or proofs. The latter especially took much time and care, and the printer's devil sent to bring them back often fell asleep in his chair. So finally Baudelaire eluded all visitors by correcting proofs at the printing house, in the evening. "*I am working*," he wrote his mother in August. "But when shall I have a valet and a cook and a home of my own?"

Through 1855 the tales continued to appear in *Le Pays*, which now commissioned him to treat the fine arts in the First Universal Exposition. This article shows what critical ideas he shares with Poe.

Like Poe he believes in Ideal Beauty. But after seeing the Chinese art at the Exposition, Baudelaire cannot accept any academic Platonic Absolute which is unchangeable for all peoples: he knows that beauty takes different forms in different climates and ages. He still thinks that all forms of beauty are but keys on the great harpsichord of Universal *Correspondances*, but he will not attempt to prove it. To study the exotic art of another race is to enrich

one's soul with a world of new ideas and experiences: it is to reject all dogmas and systems. Now he prefers merely to feel beauty where he finds it, with its necessary strangeness depending upon its background of climate, customs, race and religion. He has clearly been struck by Taine's theories and has added them to his own formula, that art is the expression of a temperament. For him painting is still an evocation; and "it is puerile to discuss the evocatory formula of the sorcerer."

Then brusquely Baudelaire attacks the idea of progress and the Frenchman's confidence in steam and inventions. "The poor man is so Americanized by his zoöcratic and industrial philosophers that he has lost all notion of the fact that any difference between the physical and spiritual worlds exists."[1] The culture of nations has its youth, its maturity and its old age, like the life of any individual, and Baudelaire views his own age as an Age of Decadence. Here again his ideas are like Poe's, although this last one came to him from his Catholicism and from reading Joseph de Maistre.

The next article was on Delacroix, who exhibited thirty-five paintings including "The justice of Trajan" and "The taking of Constantinople by the Crusaders." "These two pictures have an essentially Shakespearean beauty, because no one after Shakespeare excels like Delacroix in mingling drama and reverie in one mysterious unity." Baudelaire loves him for the melancholy of his "Romeo and

[1] His second article, on Ingres, was not printed because he had the temerity to prefer Courbet's cynical realism to the academic style of the master, now mannered even in his portraits.

Juliet", for the melancholy charm of his women, pale with inner conflict, intense and supernatural. This is an old thought, although it makes one think of Morella and Ligeia.

Then comes a very significant paragraph. Poe, he says, asserted that opium gives all nature a supernatural interest, a despotic vitality. "But even without opium," adds Baudelaire, "who has not known those wonderful hours, real holidays of the brain, when our attentive senses perceive sensations of greater resonance, when skies of a more transparent blue deepen like a more infinite abyss, when sounds are musical and colors speak, and fragrance tells of worlds of thought? Well, the painting of Delacroix seems to me a translation of those high days of the mind. His art is clothed with intensity, and his splendor with privilege. Like nature perceived by ultra-sensitive nerves, it reveals the supernatural."

If we turn back ten years to Baudelaire's first "Salons", we see that his essential ideas in 1855 were not borrowed. But there is a Poesque atmosphere in that paragraph. One thinks of Poe in reading this description of the Crusaders at Constantinople, with the sea and the sky "tumultuous yet tranquil, as after some great event", with the city in the background, and "the gleaming waving banners flapping in the transparent air."

These were his "high days." They were the joys that compensated him for the life he was leading,

"the life of a wild beast, of a dog drenched by the storm." He had moved six times in one month, lived in newly plastered houses and old barracks infested with fleas. "I am not sure that anger gives one genius," he wrote in April, 1856; "but, admitting that, I ought to have a tremendous one, for I work only between a quarrel and a seizure of my goods, a seizure and a quarrel." The quarrels were of course with Jeanne, to whom he had returned during the winter, weary of the lonely lodgings he had lived in for nearly four years.

In this month the first volume of his translations appeared. The stories were arranged in a new sequence, planned for a public not familiar with Poe's fantasy and humor; Baudelaire had translated enough stories to be able to choose the most striking.

By July of the same year, 1856, he had finished the material for a second volume, which was published in 1857, and was working on "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym", which appeared in *Le Moniteur universel* in 1857. "Eureka" did not come out until 1864 because Baudelaire was busy with books of his own; in 1865 appeared the final volume, "Histoires grotesques et sérieuses." Time failed him to translate the literary criticism, except Poe's essay on the methods of composition used in creating "The Raven." But he read and admired the "Marginalia."

Thus Baudelaire devoted himself to Poe for seventeen years.[1] He became his apostle in France and his first avenger for Europe and thus for America. He

[1] This paragraph and the next two draw largely upon the summary made by Mr. Camille Mauclair in his admirable study of Poe.

defined Poe's genius and assured his fame. The two were brothers in their sensibility, brothers in their ideals. This is why they thought the same thoughts, and so deep a spiritual sympathy helps to explain Baudelaire's failure to write fiction of his own after he knew Poe. He was paralyzed by seeing his own themes already perfectly developed.

Admiration of such a type naturally produced imitation in the younger writer. Baudelaire saw in Poe a model and magnified his own sufferings in order to strengthen his resemblance to his idol. With his allowance and his mother to help him, he never starved, as did Poe at Fordham. But as he had first exaggerated his rôle of Hamlet in his attitude toward his stepfather, so he travestied his rôle as a brother of Poe, a *poète maudit*. He was his own Griswold; he created the Baudelaire legend by imitating Poe as he saw him, magnifying the good and evil alike with that demoniac imagination which was creating "Les Fleurs du mal."

He magnified the influence of his heredity. One thinks of Poe's "Berenice" in reading that note in his diary where he refers to his maniac ancestors, in solemn palace halls, victims of their terrible passions. He wished to see himself as a martyr to his exceptional nature and to his education, a monster, yet a victim. Poe provided his restless ego with a satisfying mirror: he tried to be "his heir in all things." We may add that he even thought — no doubt of it! — that such an identification helped him as a translator.

To what extent he deceived himself — because even brothers are different — is another question. His sense of style is certainly his own. If he does yield now and then to the sorcery of his master, borrowing motifs or metaphors, he casts them into a finer mold, the mold of his Latin culture.

His translation proves it, despite occasional mistakes that show too great dependence upon his dictionary. Astonishingly literal as it is, it still surpasses the original. It has no paragraphs filling two pages, no frightful lapses into the jargon of journalism, none of the vulgar smartness that makes us remember that Poe wrote in 1840. Many things in Poe's diction "date" him definitely. Not so with Baudelaire: he gives us the classic French of all time. This is why Walter Pater preferred to read Poe in French: his ear caught Baudelaire's superiority in elegance and tone unity.

Poe's character is certainly less complicated than his Gallic brother's. He did not know in the same degree the spiritual tortures that Baudelaire endured — that truceless war between Ormuzd and Ahriman, or, as Diderot put it, between the Christian and the Natural Man within his breast. This conflict, an essential note in the French Romantic poets no less than in Corneille, Poe seems to have escaped. But the battle of the Two Powers that left his soul and flesh alike lacerated was the very essence of Baudelaire's inner life. We find it plainly in his poems, which grip the reader by the intensity of the passions aroused by that unending war.

VIII · LES FLEURS DU MAL

When in 1856 the first volume of the Poe translations appeared and Baudelaire's name greeted the eye of a larger public in Paris bookstalls, it became imperative to publish his long-withheld poems at once. The moment had come for the "thunderbolt" which was to make him great and famous.

The poems had been announced as early as 1846 on the back cover of his "Salon", under the title of "Les Lesbiennes." This dangerous title, which applied to only a part of the volume, was changed to "Les Limbes" in a new announcement made in 1850 and 1851. Hippolyte Babou suggested at the Café Lemblin that Baudelaire should call his book "Les Fleurs du mal"; and under that title the *Revue des deux mondes* printed in June, 1855, eighteen of the poems,[1] disclaiming at the same time any responsibility and vaunting its liberality in encouraging new talent of every sort.

Such a scandal was caused by the verses printed in the great review, and even more by the provocative title under which they appeared, that Lévy

[1] These poems were: "Au lecteur", "L'ennemi", "Le guignon", "La vie antérieure", "De profundis clamavi", "Remords posthume", "Réversibilité", "Confession", "L'aube spirituelle", "L'invitation au voyage", "L'irréparable", "Mœsta et errabunda", "Le tonneau de la haine", "La cloche fêlée", "La destruction", "La Béatrice", "Un voyage à Cythère", "L'Amour et le crâne", "Le reniement de Saint-Pierre."

withdrew, and shortly after Poulet-Malassis offered to take the book.

Baudelaire had known Poulet-Malassis since 1848, when they were fellow insurgents in the street riots. He was the son of a printer at Alençon, and a former pupil of the Ecole des Chartes. His revolutionary activities had ended in his deportation. When he was pardoned he had succeeded to his father's business and was trying to enlarge it. An atheist and a *bon vivant*, he was also a man of taste and his beautiful imprints are to-day much prized by collectors. Baudelaire accepted his offer, probably won over by the very attractive format in which he had just published Banville's "Odes funambulesques."

The edition was to be fifteen hundred copies and the poet was to receive twenty-five centimes (five cents) per copy, an eighth of the retail price. This first edition comprised but one hundred and one poems. "We must make a volume composed only of good things," wrote Baudelaire to his publisher: "not much text, few poems, but very showy ones which will seem to be very important." He asked for plenty of white pages, and despite his love of archaistic spelling, refused to accept "any coquetry." He wanted an English format.

The typesetting and printing took nearly five months. But the poet was very meticulous: he complained of smutched proofs, he asked for a thicker paper. Poulet-Malassis did not always follow directions, nor did his partner Broise, and the whole first section had to be reprinted. These directions

prescribed even the amount of space between the word and the colon or semicolon; his spacing indicated the "declamation" of the line, he averred, no less than its meaning.

So "Les Fleurs du mal" did not appear until July 11, 1857. The very important *Figaro* reviewed the book in a hostile article, slyly praising three of the most daring poems, which brought the volume into the courts. Hearing through Leconte de Lisle of the danger threatening him, Baudelaire wrote his publisher to hide the rest of the edition for fear of seizure. No seizure seems to have taken place, but the scandal was so great that two editors of Parisian newspapers did not dare to publish the articles that Asselineau and Barbey d'Aurevilly wrote in Baudelaire's defense.

Their fears were not groundless, considering that there was a strong group of Catholic reactionaries around the Empress. But at the trial, which took place August 18, no "offense to religion" was found in the book. It was condemned for "*outrages contre la morale publique et les bonnes mœurs.*" Six of the poems were suppressed: "Les bijoux", "Le Léthé", "A celle qui est trop gaie", the longer "Femmes damnées", "Lesbos" and "Les métamorphoses du vampire." Poulet-Malassis and his partner were each to pay a fine of one hundred francs and the poet one of three hundred. Baudelaire who had in vain told his attorney not to fail to use in his defense the "*ordures*" of Musset and Béranger — a hint given by crafty "Uncle Beuve" — was of course

disgusted with "the misunderstanding", as he euphemistically termed his condemnation. He had expected "a reparation to his honor!"

This "misunderstanding" of his life's work was due to a great injustice. The court considered and judged his poems piecemeal, under a microscope. No one saw that the book was not an album of unrelated verse, but a series which taken as a whole can only inspire horror of vice.

"Les Fleurs du mal" is really a confession. Baudelaire admitted this in an intimate letter written the year before he died. "Must I tell you that in that *atrocious* book I have put *all my heart*, *all my affections*, *all my religion*, (travestied), *all my hatred?* It is true that I shall keep on writing the contrary, and swear by all the gods that it is a book of *pure art* and *aped emotions* and *dexterous imitation*, but I shall be lying like a dentist."

All his heart, all his affections, all his religion, all his hatreds. It is these sadistic hatreds inspired by his nerves which make the book seem at times a mystification. One has to *know* Baudelaire to explain his mania for shocking. One has to know that sick and overstrung soul, which found life a long train of catastrophic repressions, to see how he came at last to feel a morbid desire to shock others in his turn. Not strong enough to react healthily, Baudelaire exploded in a paroxysm of revolt all the wilder because of the curb of his dandyism — a revolt such as we find so often among intellectual

types in early manhood. And it was in early manhood that "Les Fleurs du mal" were nearly all composed, excepting one series of love poems whose explanation requires another chapter.

Had the book been published after its virtual completion, at the end of 1843 or during 1844, it would have been excused for its violence, essentially Romantic. That violence must be judged by comparison with the books written when the poet was in his twenties. Thus considered "Les Fleurs du mal" loses some of its bizarre qualities, and we can perceive its real originality.

Its real originality lies not in its cult of the horrible, which is found in Hugo's "Notre-Dame." It does not lie in its preoccupation with the corpse or the Conqueror Worm, first exploited by Gautier in the "Comédie de la mort" (1838), nor in its diabolism, since the Devil had been a familiar figure in French literature since the beginning of the century. These external horrors had all been used by the "ferocious school" of the eighteen-thirties; consider Balzac's "L'élixir de longue vie", Mérimée's "Mateo Falcone" and Don Juan story, the vampire tales which came in with translations of Bürger's "Lénore", the dreadful fiction typified by Janin's "L'âne mort et la femme guillotinée." To a reader who knows the *école féroce*, Baudelaire's verse loses its outward trappings of horror.

The poet was born ten years later than Musset and Gautier, themselves the youngest of the Romanticists. Those who came a decade too late, who

reached adolescence long after the bursting of the Romantic wave, were foredoomed to pass their impressionable years amid the scum of its subsidence. Born the same year as Baudelaire, Maxime DuCamp wrote the "Mémoires d'un suicidé", in a mood which he himself considered half insane. Born too in 1821, Flaubert in his lurid schoolboy fiction revealed all the Satanism, love of the macabre, Byronic egomania and joy in shocking that characterized the last efforts of a dying literary mode.

But Flaubert had the strength to win to clearer waters and reject his juvenilia as soon as he saw by comparison with the classics how badly they were written. Baudelaire, brought up on the masters and writing even in his 'teens Alexandrines worthy of Racine, found that destroying his verses was a different matter. He lived with them, as he corrected and polished their rhymes; they molded him no less than he molded them.

They molded him until even in his maturity they were absolutely true to his exasperated revolt against the world of fact. The insulting "Au lecteur" with all its pretentious bombast, its invocation to the "hypocritic reader, my equal, my brother", is thus retrospectively true; it comes straight out of that "absolute frankness" which he recommends as a means of originality. It reveals the reaction of his nerves. Thus "Les Fleurs du mal" shows us how Baudelaire became like so many neurotics, the victim of a youthful mask, which grew into his flesh and became a part of it.

But without this mask, be sure of it, he would never have revealed himself to the world as he did, pitilessly and unsparingly. For no poet has painted his own portrait so faithfully as Baudelaire, depicting with cruel burin his vice and his vileness, no less than his spirituality. For the first time in the history of poetry a man has revealed himself entire in his verses, and if "Les Fleurs du mal" is a diabolistic Pilgrim's Progress through the Valley of Sin, it is because the poet could only view life in the red flame of his own inner struggle:—the war between the Flesh and the Spirit within him, first perceived in childhood, when a religious training made him look upon man and the world through the doctrine of the Fall.

The form of his verse goes back to Malherbe, to the classical tradition; and its philosophy comes straight from Bossuet. The casual reader may not see this when he first takes up the volume. He thinks of Alfred de Vigny's conception of misunderstood genius as he reads the story of the poet's destiny of suffering in "Bénédiction"; he is soon reminded of Sainte-Beuve's self-analysis and Gautier's cult of horror. But the religious note is struck in the very first poem, "Au lecteur", a religion viewed negatively, *travestied* or masked, as Baudelaire confessed in 1866:

> On Evil's pillow with its spells athrill
> Our souls are lulled by Satan Trismegist,
> He turns to vapor — sovereign alchemist —
> The pure rich metal of our virgin will.
> The Devil pulls the cords that move us all!

The invocation to God is less frank, but it is contained in the poem "Elévation", which has all of Lamartine's mystic aspiration. By his faculty of spiritual ecstasy the poet soars far above life and understands "the speech of flowers and of voiceless things." Through his imaginative intuition the poet reads the meaning of nature, that "grove of symbols" in which perfumes, colors and sounds find their harmony in an all-inclusive unity ("Les correspondances").

As for reality, it can only be inferior to the poet's vision. The world is decadent even in physical beauty: it is not the Greek world in which no contradiction of flesh and spirit existed; it is a sad, ugly universe ruled by the grim god Utility ("J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues"). But for the poet there is a path of escape, for Art is

> the mightiest voice our souls
> Possess, O Lord, to prove their worth to Thee!

This is the meaning of "Les phares", so significant in showing his reaction to the representative arts. Then he avows his desires as a poet, and the needs that chain them, in "La muse malade" and "La muse vénale." In his adolescent languors he is haunted by memories or intuitions of a previous existence ("La vie antérieure") which explain his longings; he would be glad in his ever-present timidity to read the future ("Les bohémiens"). But he did read his future in "Les Fleurs du mal": the astonishing thing about the book — and a thing only

partly explained by self-hypnosis—is that in this volume he foresaw his whole life-tragedy, even to the end.

Two poems set forth the ideals that must uphold him: the energy of the ocean and the pride of Don Juan; and one the dangers of that pride which, despite its stimulus, may well be a device of the Adversary. His ideals of beauty follow, embodied in a sculptural perfection; then his ideals of woman ("L'idéal" and "La géante"), a Lady Macbeth inspired by revulsion from his mother's petty virtues and a calm giantess that might give to his sensitive weakness the protection she had given, many years before.

Then comes the dark processional of his loves. First the jewelled and perfumed Jeanne, whose sequence continues through the verses beginning:

> These lines to thee, that if my name should come
> To harbors far, across a favorite main,
> And ride the gale to Time's Elysium
> With all its freight of dreams to fret the brain,
>
> That thy report, like legends vague and vain,
> May tire my reader like a mighty drum,
> And linked in mystic union, may become
> A symbol married to this haughty strain. . . .

Then comes another series in a different key and not begun until 1852, a series dedicated to the spiritual love which remained Baudelaire's secret until his book of verses appeared. With "Le poison" and "Ciel brouillé" we pass to another and later muse; these poems foreshadow the last period in the author's erotic life, the period of satiety; "Ciel brouillé" reveals the poet's determination to wrest from life all that it holds of ecstasy:

Thy gaze is vested with a cloudy veil;
Mysterious eyes! — gray, green or azure pale? —
Cruel or soft in turn as dreams devise
— They glass the languor of the pallid skies.

Thou'rt like a soft white morn of silver gray,
Whose magic melts the soul to tears: a day
When by a secret evil racked and torn,
The quivering nerves laugh dozing minds to scorn.

Thou art as fair as lovely dales, where suns
Of misty seasons leave their benisons;
How lush and gleaming all the woodlands lie
Flaming in sunlight from a ruffled sky!

O fateful woman! clime that lures and lours!
And shall I love thy snow, its frosty hours,
And learn to clutch from winter's iron gyves
New pleasures keen as cloven ice or knives?

The next poem celebrates an erotic symbol; "Le beau navire" seems to be inspired by a love of the moment; "L'invitation au voyage", in which the poet's longings to escape become more definite than in "Parfum exotique", was written perhaps for Marie Daubrun, and "Causerie" shows by its use of *vous* for *tu* that its object is a mere acquaintance; Baudelaire was very formal with the Pandemians of the pavement. He is still pursuing love in sensation; it is part of that suffering by which he will punish himself to the end ("L'héautontimoroumenos"), to extract from flesh and spirit the last vibrations of experience.

The series of love-poems now closes with some Latin verses probably written at school or soon after, then the sonnet to his hostess of Mauritius, and

"Mœsta et errabunda" — which from its position seems also to consecrate an early memory, perhaps of the girl whom he courted at Lyons on evenings such as he describes here and in "La Fanfarlo."

But love is not all of life; part of the section "Spleen et idéal" is concerned with other emotions. "Les chats" again celebrates the lovely animals in which his sense of touch delighted; "Les hiboux" tells of his fear, learned from sad experience, of yielding to his restless desire to quit Paris. Then with the sonnet "La cloche fêlée" he introduces a new motif: his torpor of will, his apathy and the reveries they incite. We must quote one of the poems entitled "Spleen", which would seem to derive from "The Bells" if "La cloche fêlée" and one of his juvenile poems did not show how he reacted, heartsick, to their mournful tolling, on lonely evenings in his room:

When skies low-hung and heavy as a lid
Cast on the moaning soul their curse and blight,
And from the whole horizon's murky grid
Its light descends more dismal than the night;

When earth's a dungeon-cell whose chill appals,
Wherein, a fluttering bat, my Hope, alone
Buffets with timid wing the rotting walls,
And beats her head against the roof of stone;

When close as prison-bars, from overhead
The sky lets fall the curtain of the rains,
And voiceless hordes of spiders come, to spread
Their shameful cobwebs through our darkened brains,

Explosively the bells begin to ring,
Hurling their fearful clangor tow'rd the sky,
As homeless spirits lost and wandering
Might raise their indefatigable cry;

And through my brain old hearses now advance
In silence, always: Hope, so beautiful,
Weeps her defeat, and conquering Anguish plants
His great black banner on my cowering skull.

This was the mood that had tortured him so often since 1848. But there was a somber joy in his suffering during those gloomy winters, when he had the courage to quit his lodgings, don his greatcoat, turn up its collar about the red muffler that framed his clean-shaven mask with its piercing eyes, and betake himself into the streets of the Paris he loved. It mattered not that it was winter; walking gave him a Byronic sense of mastery over pain, under the gray skies which taut nerves learn to love more than sunlight. This joy appears in "Brumes et pluies", the poem of Baudelaire's most visibly inspired by Poe:

O muddy Aprils, autumns, winter days,
Seasons that lull to sleep! my love and praise
Are yours, for over heart and brain ye throw
Your shrouds of mist and tombs that hide me so.

This vast vast plain, where Boreas howls and plays,
And where night-long the creaking vane affrays,
Arouse me more than May, for now I go
Soaring on wider condor wings of woe.

Dear months of mist that in the north prevail,
No boon so sweet to souls that endless snows
Descend upon, and shades of death enclose,

As your unchanging twilight cold and pale,
— Unless some moonless eve should find us, twain,
Creeping in beds of chance to lull our pain.

It is for his evocations of moods that Baudelaire is read; no other poet has left us more exquisitely carved vignettes of his despair or his rancor or his hate. "Spleen et idéal" would far better have served him as title for the whole volume, no less than this section, which, after the confession of his destiny oppressed by Evil ("L'irrémédiable"), passes on to poems more or less objective, including several of the Parisian scenes which he in the second edition put into a section of their own.

The divisions "Fleurs du mal" and "Révolte" contain most of the poems intended to "*épater le bourgois*", to set the philistine by the ears. Baudelaire's youthful ambition to write a volume of "Lesbiennes" has dwindled, and he retains only the best of the verses that voiced the Byronic revolt of his twenties. Two of these were among the poems suppressed. But "Lesbos" had already been published without arousing protest; and "Les métamorphoses du vampire" is, like the episode which inspired it in Gautier's "Albertus", only another version of Athalie's dream in the tragedy by Racine. The third incriminating poem, "Femmes damnées", is perhaps only surpassed in its morality by "Un voyage à Cythère", which shows us how a realist might interpret Watteau's subject. Only one who had suffered long from the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh could depict these pictures of vice and its consequences: in the

island of love the poet finds only a gibbet with a swinging corpse, emasculated and torn by wild beasts:

'Twas there, poor fellow that my thoughts enfold,
I felt the beaks and fangs, like flinty shards,
Of all the vultures and the sable pards
That loved to triturate my flesh, of old. . . .

O Venus, in thy realm I found but dust,
Save that dread symbol, where my brother swayed. . . .
God, give me strength and make me unafraid
To view my heart and flesh without disgust!

The three poems of "Révolte" typify his own rebellion; he was foredoomed by his uneasy nerves to eat of the Tree, to make himself in his weakness the equal of God. Like Saint Peter he too had denied Him; a revolutionary Cain, he too in 1848 had rebelled against the smug race of Abel; he had admired in Milton's epic the figure of Satan — the ideal type of manly beauty he calls it in his diaries — because he too had felt himself disinherited:

O exiled Prince, borne down by wrongs and lies,
Who, conquered, ever stronger dost arise,

Satan, have pity on my long despair! . . .

Thou that to pariahs and lepers dost
Reveal, through love, the heaven they have lost,

Satan, have pity on my long despair! . . .

Thou that with Death, that old and mighty trull,
Begot us Hope, so mad, so beautiful! . . .

O thou that givest outlaws, soon to die,
The brow that damns a nation, standing nigh, . . .

Staff of the exiled, torch inventors woo,
Confessor of the gallow's plotting crew. . . . .

O foster-father of us all, who share
God's primal curse, and lost our Edens there,

Satan, have pity on my long despair!

And the volume closes with the rubrics "Le vin" and "La mort." After wine, that to workmen and ragpickers and murderers gives a temporary escape from sordid living — wine which to the recluse no less than all "the beggar-crew" gives back "hope and youth and strength anew" and pride that "makes one like the gods", Baudelaire's curiosity can only turn to death, to death the consoler, death which remains his sole untried infinity. Death might even give to love all that it lacked on earth, beyond the tomb, if he could find the mystic passion for which he longed:

Fair couches faintly fragrant shall be ours,
And soft divans far deeper than the tomb,
And, blooming for us, fair mysterious flowers
From bluer skies, shall light the shadowy room.

'Tis there we'll spend our last sweet amorous hours,
Twin torches vast that side by side consume,
Our flaming hearts, like two great fiery towers,
In the twin mirrors of our souls shall loom.

Some evening, made of rose and mystic blue,
We shall exchange our lightnings once anew,
And, sobbing, part when fades the final spark;

And we shall sleep until an Angel bright,
To plenish all, set wide the door and light
The flameless torches and the mirrors dark.

Then the first edition of "Les Fleurs du mal" ends significantly with "La mort des artistes", in which the poet, weary of pursuing his implacable Muse, longs for death because he hopes that the grave will somehow "allure the blossoms of his brains to bloom." It is a confession of his sterility, his impotence to attain the infinite of his Romantic ideal of Art.

We have dwelt at length upon "Les Fleurs du mal", because a poet's life is his works, far more than the adventures of his body. A poet's life is the moods that enchain him, if he has not learned to break by labor the chains of moods. Baudelaire wrote his poems under the weight of those chains, and with the very life-blood of that heart which he declares himself doomed by fate to devour. His book is a breviary of moods, often gloomy or sinister or tragic, but always perfectly evoked by his artistry; a whole side of human nature, till then excluded from the domain of Art, is shown suffused with a terrible and haunting magic. In "Les Fleurs du mal" a poet reveals the infra-red rays in the dark spectrum of our emotions, and provides us with the prism that makes them visible. No other French lyrist has so cunningly fitted the secret or clarion rhythm of his verses to the emotion he would describe. A necromantic power of suggestion gives an ineluctable spell to these morbid pages, in which a titan imagination

beats unavailing wings against the bars of life, which the Roman poet called "the flaming barriers of the world."

Was it a miracle that he foresaw his own career, even to its bitter ending? Not so, because our range of feelings is far from infinite, and its gamut is fixed by the experiences of youth.

IX · A SERAPH TURNS FLESH

By publishing "Les Fleurs du mal" Baudelaire revealed a mystic love long cherished in secret, a passion that gave his volume some of its finest poems.

This love began in the year he left Jeanne, 1852. When he was thirty-one he had decided to end his inner conflict by wholly separating his soul and his senses. The ruin of Jeanne's beauty and his flagging virility had made it easy to live alone, and attain in spirit that communion with Poe which he felt necessary to accomplish his life purpose. As one throws a bone to a dog, he gave himself Jeanne's early morning visits, freed his mind to pursue its intellectual ideal. But idealism abhors a vacuum: he soon discovered a dream-mistress to write verses for, just as Poe had done. And he surpassed his master by hiding his identity for five years.

Madame Sabatier was no Ligeia. But with Baudelaire that was not necessary: his imagination had already found in Jeanne an infinite of plastic beauty. Madame Sabatier had no trait of that ideal, which demanded the Poesque qualities of sadness and mystery: she had not even the thinness which his senses found alluring. She was a pagan daughter of health and mirth, a laughing Rubens in the flesh:

Such radiant health within thee glows,
Beholders, grim and taciturn,
Smile, dazzled by the fires that burn
Beneath thy shoulders' living rose. . . .

Such was the Muse to whom Baudelaire, shortly after Poe's "Stanzas to Helen" had furnished metaphors for his letter to the artists' model Marie, sent the poem from which this quatrain comes. After ten years with his sensual and quarrelsome Jeanne he needed a Platonic love, a maternal love: his mother was in Madrid.

Apollonie Sabatier, whose real name was Aglaë Savatier, was just Baudelaire's age, thirty-one. She was the mistress of the banker Mosselmann, a frequenter of the Hôtel Pimodan who had rescued her from the model's platform. Born of bourgeois stock, she had a certain education. "Tall, beautifully formed, with slender wrists and ankles and lovely hands, silky golden-brown hair, naturally waving, a fair skin, regular features, a mischievous bright glance and a tiny laughing mouth" — such is her portrait painted by Judith Gautier, who adds that "her triumphant air seemed to shed light and happiness around her."

She was so beautiful that Clésinger had chosen her as model for his statue, "La femme piquée par un serpent", in which the marble seems to quiver under the venom of the viper, like flesh shaken by an erotic spasm. Ricard had painted her, and Meissonier. But Baudelaire was thinking of the statue

and the serpent when he wrote this poem; he was tempted, not enamored:

> . . . Mad creature who hast maddened me,
> I hate thee fiercely as I love!
>
> Oft in a garden fair, apart,
> Dragging alone my apathy,
> I've felt, as if in mockery,
> The sunlight lacerate my heart;
>
> And June with all her verdure dense
> Oppressed me with such awful power
> That on an unoffending flower
> I punished Nature's insolence.
>
> So when at night thou art asleep,
> And Venus chimes the hour of love,
> Seeking the form I'm dreaming of
> — Craven and stealthy, I would creep,
>
> Thy flesh to punish for this mirth,
> Thy breasts, forgiven now, to crush,
> And in thy wondering flank, ablush,
> To cleave a furrow. . . .

These sadistic verses which Sainte-Beuve admired are not hard to explain. Baudelaire loved the lady in secret, and he hated her because the suggestive statue had too long bemused him. He saw her at her literary Sunday evenings, but not often, as he did not meet Mosselmann until 1854; and at these dinners his timidity kept him in the background; like a true voluptuary, he did not relish the Rabelaisian wit of her little court. At her table were found the greatest writers and artists of the day: Préault,

Dumas *père*, Feydeau, Gautier, Meissonier, Musset, Henry Monnier, Clésinger, Ricard, Flaubert, Bouilhet, Maxime DuCamp and others.

Undoubtedly her background of luxury helped to attract Baudelaire, poor vagabond of dirty lodging houses that he was, always longing for a home and not admitted into many salons of "honorable society." He had long dreamed of her before he sent her the cruel verses intended to pique her curiosity — just as his hero Cramer had attacked "La Fanfarlo" in the press. But five months later he sent her the poem "Réversibilité": his lust was forgotten then and he loved her for the qualities he had hated:

> . . . Angel of health, dost know Delirium,
> Pale exile, in Life's vast bleak hospital,
> Creeping to find a bit of sunny wall
> With dragging feet and lips that move, though dumb?
> Angel of health, dost know Delirium?
>
> Angel of happiness and joy and light,
> A dying David would have sought afresh
> For vigor, from the fragrance of thy flesh;
> But I ask only for thy prayers, to-night,
> Angel of happiness and joy and light!

The poet who sat timidly in a corner of her salon has yielded to the charm of her kindness, which reconciled all the warring egos of her guests — to that tact which gave her the nickname of *La Présidente*, the moderator. In this poem he depicts his weakness in order to attract her pity.

Pity and sympathy were to unite their thoughts

one evening in the moonlight. A week later, in May, 1853, Baudelaire walked home with her, her arm lightly linked in his:

. . . 'Twas late: a great medallion, cold and bright,
The moon gazed shimmering down,
And like a flood, the calmness of the night
Poured on the dreaming town. . . .

Then suddenly, drawn by the mystic bond
Knit where the pale moon shone
From thee, — rich instrument whose chords respond
To radiant mirth alone.

From thee, far merrier than a bugle's cry
At glittering dawn, in spring,
A plaintive note, an odd and puzzling sigh
Fell . . . .

This was the burden of that bitter sigh:
"That all things fail our trust;
That men, for all the chivalry they cry,
Are filled with greed and lust; . . .

That she is mad who leans upon a heart,
That love and beauty fade,
Die like all things, and in Oblivion's cart
Pass to the World of Shade.

Oft I recall that magic moonlit sky,
Languorous, calm, and all
Thy horrible secrets whispered in a sigh
At Love's confessional.

Perhaps Madame Sabatier was merely tired and Baudelaire's vast imagination soared higher in his need for sympathy. No matter; that sigh blotted out for him the thought of her mockeries and gave

love a new consecration. He sent her the poem; then, nearly a year later, he wrote and sent, still anonymously, the sonnet to her eyes, so reminiscent of Poe's "Stanzas to Helen": her eyes will lead him away from his morbidity and into paths of beauty. This was the first of three mystically spiritual sonnets, sent her within ten days in February, 1854, which reach their finest expression in "L'aube spirituelle":

> When to the drunkard's room the rosy East
> Brings back the ravening vision of the dream,
> She wakens, by a dark mysterious scheme,
> An Angel bright in the besotted beast. . . .
>
> . . . Thus, my divinity, pure child of light,
>
> Over the stupid orgy's dregs of woe,
> Brighter and lovelier, thine image flies
> In fluttering rays before my dazzled eyes;
>
> The sun has slain the tapers' fiery glow:
> So, all victorious, thy face grows one —
> — Resplendent spirit — with the eternal sun!

He made her a divinity, just as he had once made Jeanne a Beelzebub. "Never was love more disinterested, more ideal, more filled with respect than the love I cherish secretly for you," he swears in his letter; he is not even jealous of the banker Mosselmann, but glad to find that he is worthy of her. Why does he not reveal his identity? Because she has her affections placed and perhaps her duty, he writes in May, 1854, confessing that his silences and his ardors are explained by the fact that he dreams

MADAME SABATIER

By Clésinger

of her during his hours of gloom, and uses his memory of her as an inspiration. With this letter he sends the "Hymne", a lyric not included in the first nor even the second edition of his volume, but written for her alone:

> To her, my love and my delight,
> My full heart's fiery ecstasy,
> Immortal idol, heavenly sprite,
> My pledge in immortality!
>
> Like briny air from ocean shores
> Through all my days she drifts and clings
> And in my thirsty spirit pours
> Her love for everlasting things. . . .

And then in May, 1854, he stopped writing these anonymous letters. But, thirteen months later he included three of the poems already given her in the selection from his forthcoming volume published in the *Revue des deux mondes*, — poems which of course were signed. Hence in June, 1855, Madame Sabatier probably knew who her anonymous adorer was, but she made no sign, nor did he. He wrote other poems to her but did not send them. Sending more verses after he had revealed himself in the great periodical might in some way change things, and at the end of 1855 he thought he had things perfectly arranged.

He had returned to Jeanne. Though his flesh had found a sedative in the old relation not completely broken off, while his spirit soared indefinitely content in the void, neither of these relations filled his heart, any more than his mother to whom he now used the *vous* and who sometimes refused to see him.

During the previous December he had suffered such loneliness that he longed to go back to Jeanne, or to "the other" — probably Marie Daubrun: "Whatever the cost I must have a family: that is the only way to make me work and spend less." This December he carried out his plan; his experiment in idealism and partial celibacy had failed. By April they were quarrelling again, but he had at least a bit of his past to tie to, and give him the feeling that he existed as a person as well as a poet.

Then something happened. Did Jeanne suspect the division he had made between his heart and his flesh? Did she find the poems addressed to Madame Sabatier, that cerebral passion which required no response from its divinity? We know not; but in September, 1856, just after Baudelaire wrote that he was planning a novel on the ideal of conjugal love, Jeanne spoiled his solution of the problem by leaving him!

Any marriage is a tie: this is proved by the letter that Baudelaire wrote his mother:

"I did everything that a man could do to prevent this break from happening. This rending apart, this struggle lasted two weeks. Jeanne always replied imperturbably that I had a character that could not be dealt with. . . . I shall always regret that woman . . . she was my only distraction, my only pleasure, my only comrade. . . . When I was quite convinced that it was really irreparable, I was seized with a nameless fury: for ten days I was without sleep, vomiting all the time and obliged to remain in hiding

because I kept weeping incessantly. . . . I could not even get any consolation from my pride. Because it all came about by my fault: I had used and abused; it amused me to make a martyr of her and I was made a martyr in my turn."

But, a month later, his spirit rebounded in its new freedom, giving him "an immoderate lust of living." The poet in him was occupied; he was forced to toil daily at his translation of Poe, he was eager to place his volume of verse then sufficiently advertised; he was living in his work until the book appeared and was suppressed, in the summer of 1857.

The moment had come when he felt that a woman could help him: he remembered that Flaubert had had the Empress on his side when the legal attack on "Madame Bovary" had been launched. Madame Sabatier was a woman of influence, with many friends in the backstairs of politics. So he wrote to her openly and in his own handwriting, two days before the trial. He told her that the censors had dared to incriminate two of the poems addressed to her. He told her that he knew she had guessed his secret and "avenged herself", because one day her little sister had asked him: "Are you still in love with my sister, and still writing her such superb letters?"

She had told him he was forgetting her, because his letters and verses had ceased, for he swears:

"To forget you is not possible. They say that poets have lived who have spent their whole lives with their eyes fixed upon a cherished image . . .

You are more than a loved and dreamed-of image, you are my earthly religion (*ma superstition*). When I commit some great piece of stupidity, I say to myself: Good Lord! if she knew it! When I do something virtuous, I say: That is something that brings me close to her — spiritually.

"And the last time that I had the happiness (much in spite of myself) of meeting you, for you do not know with what care I avoid you! — I said to myself: It would be singular if that carriage were waiting for her; perhaps I had better take another street. — And then (I heard you say): *Bon soir*, Monsieur, with that beloved voice whose timbre delights and lacerates me. I left you, repeating all along the way: *Bon soir*, Monsieur, and trying to imitate your voice." This is exquisite: only a poet could thus make friends with a dream.

Then his letter comes to the point. He asks her to help him get "a word of sense" to the judges. And he concludes:

"You are my usual companion and my secret. It is this intimacy, in which I have so long answered my own voice, that has given me the boldness to be so familiar. Adieu, dear lady. I kiss your hands with all my devotion. All the verse comprised between pages 84 and 105 belong to you."

Of course Madame Sabatier lost no time in opening the copy of "Les Fleurs du mal" printed on fine paper and specially bound, which accompanied this letter. And we may imagine her emotions when she saw that instead of "forgetting," as she had teasingly

told him, he had written for her three more poems, "Toute entière", "Harmonie du soir" and "Le flacon."

The first of these might have given her pause. Clearly it mingled her image with Jeanne's and it made love a temptation of the Devil. But in "Le flacon" he promised to preserve her memory to all posterity, as the flask preserves the fragrance of the perfume that filled it. Baudelaire was now famous; the scandal had revealed his genius: and by those verses she felt herself lifted into the skies forever, like a heroine out of Greek mythology. Twelve days were enough to kindle an answering passion in the lovely mocker: within twelve days she used to him the *tu* of accepted lovers.

The actual courtship was even shorter: Baudelaire could not have seen her for more than a few moments during the two days before the trial, busy as he was advising his lawyer and trying to get an article defending his volume from the wily Sainte-Beuve. He called at her Sunday reception on the twenty-third and the next day sent her a plaster cast from his collection, with a tenderly respectful note which still uses the *vous*. But since the trial had resulted in his conviction, he was for days burning with indignation and hurt pride, and in such a mood a poet is always on the verge of casting off his mask and laying bare his heart. This must have happened the next Thursday, when he called again; then she came to him at some *hôtel garni* or lodging house in the Rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau — a room rented by his

absent friend Poulet-Malassis for his stops at Paris or for similar rendezvous. Here Baudelaire evidently found out that this Madonna was a Phryne, and that her passion had other exigencies than the "servile tenderness" of Jeanne: the obscene poems that she for years allowed Gautier to write her reveal her temperament.

Perhaps there occurred what Stendhal calls an "erotic fiasco", for Baudelaire often considered suicide in the months that followed. Madame Sabatier was no less disappointed at the results of her surrender, but she wrote him bravely, dwelling as it seems on their last Platonic meeting:

"To-day I am calmer. The influence of our evening together Thursday makes itself felt more. I can tell you (thee), without your accusing me of exaggeration, that I am the happiest of women, that never have I felt more deeply that I love you, that I simply never saw you more handsome, more worthy of adoration, *mon divin ami*. You can play the peacock if that flatters you, but don't go and look at yourself in the glass; for whatever you do, you will never succeed in giving yourself the expression that I saw for a second on your face. Now, whatever happens, I shall always see you thus, that's the Charles I love; you can pinch your lips together and knit your brows as much as you like without my caring, I shall close my eyes and see the other."

Next Sunday he again went to her house, where the presence of Mosselmann or the realization that she was officially his, there amid all the luxury she

owed to him, gave the poet "an inexplicable moral malaise" which he took away from her apartment and which lasted until he wrote her the next day.

He sent her back one of her letters, probably the first, in which she asked his forgiveness for her "absolute lack of modesty."

"That is why you (thou) are still dearer to me," replied Baudelaire. And again he quotes from her passionate declaration:

"It seems to me that I have been yours (thine) since the first day I saw you. You will do with me what you like, but I am yours in body, mind and heart."

The imprudence of this letter of hers makes him send it back, bidding her to hide it! Then he reminds her of their conversation the evening before:

"As I told you (thee) yesterday, *you will forget me, you will betray me: one who amuses you now will bore you later.* And I add to-day: *Those alone suffer who like fools take the things of the heart seriously.* — You see, my beautiful beloved, that I have odious prejudices in regard to women. — In short, I have *no faith.* — You have a lovely soul, but after all it is a woman's soul.

"See how our situation has been turned upside down in the last few days. First we are both obsessed by the fear of afflicting a gentleman who has the good luck to be still in love with you. Then we are afraid of our own tempest, because we know, and I in particular, that there are bonds which are hard to loosen.

"And finally, finally, a few days ago you were a divinity, which is so convenient, so beautiful, so inviolate. Now you are a woman."

Now you are a woman: that tells the whole story, and Baudelaire hastens to confess that he has "a horror of passion", because he "knows it in all its ignominies", and that when he "carries away the perfume of her arms and hair", he also carries with him a desire to return to them. "And then what an insupportable obsession it is!"

Madame Sabatier's letter shows clearly that she still loved him. Baudelaire's reply is an equally patent documentary proof of his egotism and his nervous fear of binding himself and accepting a responsibility which will further lessen his liberty. "Love is a crime in which we cannot do without an accomplice", he notes in his diary. Not for him, now, in his cool maturity dominated by second thoughts rather than by passion, any slavery to the spell of remembered fragrances; not for him any sacrifice of his liberty: the claims of Mosselmann and Jeanne are only casuistries; he is thinking only of his pride. Of course he is not conscious of that; a true Romanticist, he deceives himself before he deceives others.

She replied:

". . . You do not love me. That is the cause of your fears, your hesitation to contract an alliance which under such conditions would become a source of annoyance to you and a continual torture to me. Haven't I proof of it in a sentence of your letter?

It is so clear that it chills my blood: — *In short, I haven't any faith.* — You haven't any faith! Why then you haven't any love . . . O mon Dieu! what suffering that thought gives me and how I would like to weep upon your breast. It seems to me that that would solace me. However, I shall change nothing in regard to our meeting to-morrow, were it only to try myself out in my rôle as a friend. Ah! why did you ask to see me again?"

Baudelaire continued his retreat. In his letters he excuses himself for twice missing her Sunday receptions. He tries to pacify her by little gifts. He laments his unhappiness and his boredom: he will not even accept a charming invitation from Wagner! She wonders "what sort of a drama they are playing", asks him to explain his conduct, "too subtle for a big stupid like me." She blames herself for yielding, for not receiving him "more gravely, more thoughtfully", when he came to her. "But what would you have? When one's lips are trembling and one's heart thumping, sane thoughts fly away."

He is now avoiding even her Sunday soirée. "It seems that you are terribly afraid of being left alone with me," she writes, but again she forgives. "Yesterday I had dictated to myself a course of conduct which was full of dignity, and within these twenty-four hours I feel my heart is not strong enough to maintain it. Yet my anger was legitimate enough, Charles. What must I think when I see you flee my caresses, except that you are thinking of the other one, whose black soul and face come between us?

In short, I feel myself humiliated and degraded. If it were not for my self-respect, I would insult you."

It was then that her own pride healthily reacted, after a night of "burning jealousy" whose like she prayed that he might be forever spared. And while Baudelaire kept up his retreat, avoiding her but sending her Barbey d'Aurevilly's novels which he borrowed from the author, missing even her Sundays but longing, in a letter, for "one of those good visits" in which she "plays unconsciously the divine rôle of a physician", she fought out her battle, until finally she was able to write him, with a brave attempt at her former mockery:

"Good morning, my Charles. How is the remnant of your heart behaving? Mine is quieter. I scold it hard so as not to bore you with its weaknesses. You shall see. I shall learn how to force it to descend to the temperature that you have dreamed of. I shall very certainly suffer; but in order to please you, I shall resign myself to endure every possible affliction."

She became his friend, or rather, as he called her in a letter of some months later, his "tender comrade", and after a little he resumed his Sunday visits to her drawing-room. He wrote no more verses to her or inspired by her, except perhaps "La rançon." But as the woman who inspired "Le flacon", she takes her place in his life next to that of Jeanne Duval, whose memory, alas! mingles with hers at the end of the poem, as it did in the poet's torn and struggling soul:

. . . So when Oblivion blots my memory dim
And in a corner of a cupboard grim
I lie a flask rejected, sorry, old,
Crackled and dusty, slimy, green with mold,

I'll be thy coffin, lovely pestilence!
I'll prove thy power and thy virulence,
Dear poison brewed by angels! gnawing fire
I've drunk, my life, my death, my heart's desire!

And the dandy, who to salve his timidity had divorced his soul and his senses and satisfied the latter with inferiors, returned to the prison of his moral solitude and wrote in his diary: "The genius wants to be one." Unable to see that the only escape from that solitude is through self-sacrifice to social ideals, to objective art or to some great cause, he could not learn to love. "Felicity, such as mortals conceive it, had always produced the effect of an emetic" upon his mind so jealous of its defenses; he avowed two years later that he lacked the courage to accept it; but he did crave love, and that autumn in "La rançon" he revealed the void within the already disintegrating self that prisoned him:

To pay our ransom, Heaven-assigned,
Two fields we hold, whose fertile soil
We must make rich by constant toil
With the rude mattock of the mind;

To bring to bloom a single stem,
Or wrest a scanty sheaf of ears,
Our brows, with bitter streaming tears,
Must never cease to water them.

One field is Art, the other Love.
— And when that Day of Wrath-to-be,
The Day of Justice comes, if we
Would satisfy the Judge above,

Then we must point to barns abrim
With garnered hoards of golden grain
And flowers fair enough to gain
The suffrage of the Seraphim.

Baudelaire seriously considered suicide, we know, in the autumn of the year in which reality pricked his illusions of spiritual love and a satisfying fame. Instead of a fame that would fulfill him he had got only notoriety, and at heart he wanted that no more than the normal love that might have saved him from hypochondria. He resumed his mask: for a month or two he enjoyed the *succès de scandale* his book had brought him: in the pages of the Goncourt Journal we see him dining at the Café Riche, clean-shaven as a bishop, cravatless, with his immaculate linen shirt open like Byron's, and accentuating with his small and carefully manicured hands an eloquence as caustic as that of a Revolutionary orator.

But notoriety soon turned to Dead Sea fruit. "What I feel is an immense discouragement," he wrote his mother in December, 1857, "an intolerable feeling of isolation, a perpetual fear of some vague misfortune, a complete distrust of all my powers, a total absence of all desires, an impossibility of finding anything whatever to amuse me. The bizarre success of my book and the hatreds it aroused interested me for a short time, then I relapsed . . . I ask myself: What is the use of this? what is the use of that? It is the very essence of spleen."

He suffers from "the offensive contrast of his soul's love of honor" and his wretched life; he

suffers from a stomach that can digest nothing. He wonders: "Is it my sick body which diminishes my brain power and my will, or is it my soul's cowardice that wears out my body . . . If the soul can cure the body, violent and uninterrupted labor will cure me, but I must will it with an enfeebled will power — which makes a vicious circle."

He was paralyzed by that fungus of the intellect whose creeping progress he had years before described in the four poems entitled "Spleen." Again he was the "king of rainy lands and cold", already "old and impotent" despite his comparative youth, bored with all things because his blood had turned into "the green slime of Lethe."

> No words can tell how lame my hours go,
> When, crushed by years of ever-falling snow,
> Boredom, dull fruitage of my apathy,
> Waxes as vast as immortality. . . .

Now he could not even put his mood into verse, because of lack of will power: he had "never fallen so low" before.

Behind the avowal we see the man — and the author. For years he had lived not his own life but the life of Poe; for months he had pored over the verses of his youth, which made the present seem still more unreal and unsatisfying. He needed the contact of reality, as every writer does after finishing a subjective book which absorbs his whole intellectual existence. He needed to live. But when his dream-mistress turned into a woman of ardent

blood and clamorous flesh he had learned that he was too old for illusion and perhaps too old for pleasure. Life had nothing left but self-analysis.

He turned to his mother, all the more eagerly because she was alone again. General Aupick had died two months before "Les Fleurs du mal" was published. He had completed that "brilliant career" — to quote from his last will and testament — through which he "had passed without letting himself be dazzled by its glory." To his "tender and devoted" widow he left the cottage they had purchased at Honfleur for summer vacations, and his furniture, carriages and horses, which brought her about thirty thousand francs (six thousand dollars). . . . He had saved nothing, but Madame Aupick had little difficulty in obtaining from the government a pension of six thousand francs (twelve hundred dollars), and she had some two thousand francs a year from the small fortune left her by her first husband.

Baudelaire turned to his mother, despite the fact that the letters show that her indulgence had ceased at the time. In February she had forbidden him ever again to turn to her for money. When death left her free she still obeyed the General's wishes, kept before her by his friend Emon and by her parish priest at Honfleur. Even before he asked it she wrote her son that he must never think that he could return to her house: he had "dishonored" her. He had dishonored her by publishing "Les Fleurs du mal."

Yet Baudelaire had given time and energy to the sale of his stepfather's effects in May, when he was very busy correcting the proof sheets of his book. He wrote her that in Aupick's death he saw "a warning", a sort of "military call to attention." He begged her forgiveness for his neglect, his violence: all such things were forbidden him now that she was left alone with no one but him to turn to. He promised to do all that could be done in the future for her happiness. Only one thing stood between them — the fact that she still kept him a legal minor subject to a notary. And she responded by coming to Paris before the trial, to use her influence in his favor.

He did not dare send her his book of verses until he remembered that she would read about them in hostile reviews. Then he despatched a copy on fine paper, assuring her that he had "suppressed a third" of his verses in the proofs — a falsehood probably intended to compel her forgiveness. In reality he was proud of the book. "I know that this volume, with its good qualities and its defects, will make its way in the memory of cultured readers, beside the best poems of Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier and even of Byron."

He had "dishonored" her! So in December, 1857, he sent her some reviews of his verses. "Now you will be able to judge of the sinister explosion caused by this volume, in which I decided to put some of my fits of anger and melancholy — this very book which you so oddly repulsed, when you thought

best to add your reproaches to the insults heaped upon me from every quarter." His mother's attitude undoubtedly added to Baudelaire's apathy during that fateful winter: why work on when one's attainment of a life's goal is thus nullified? At any rate, his muse was almost silent during the rest of the year 1857: he published only a few poems and prose-poems, two articles on caricaturists[1], French and foreign, and a review of "Madame Bovary." In this review, he ironically thanks Flaubert's judges for the respect they showed to the literary beauty of the novel by not condemning it, defends Flaubert from the charge of being a realist, and notes the virility he gave to his heroine Madame Bovary, whom Baudelaire considers a victim of the Ideal.

Every consideration urged him to write: he was bound by contract to furnish three more volumes to his friend and publisher Poulet-Malassis, who had already paid him large sums on account; he had to complete for Lévy his third volume of Poe, the "Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym." But he wrote his mother in December: "The proofs have been lying on my table for a month, without my being able to shake off my dolorous cowardice."

The next letter shows however that for the previous month he had been far from well: he writes that all that he eats chokes him and gives him colic. In order to sleep he had had to take laudanum and the

[1] The first article discusses Charlet, Monnier, Grandville, Gavarni and Daumier; the second, Hogarth, Cruikshank, Goya, Pinelli and Breughel. Notes found in Baudelaire's papers show that he contemplated treating the subject of caricature at greater length, perhaps relating it to his essay on laughter.

opiate had weakened his digestion and his will power alike. He wanted to go to the seashore for a cure, to join his mother now eager to have him come, but he needed the libraries of Paris to complete his book on contemporary art and artists — the "Curiosités esthétiques." Thus he put off leaving; but in January he suffered from a swollen and terribly painful leg; he could hardly descend a staircase and could not even go to see Madame Sabatier. Characteristically he admitted to her that the ridiculousness of his infirmity hurt him more than his actual pain.

In March he went to Honfleur to inspect his new quarters. The visit disclosed certain inconveniences: the village had no cafés like those of Paris, and when his supply of laudanum was gone he could get no more. So he returned to the capital to wait for the impossible, expecting that the government which had condemned his verse would make him a Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur, hoping and striving to get an article on his work or on Poe from the cautious Sainte-Beuve, who could easily have made the appearance of "Arthur Gordon Pym" the peg on which to hang an essay. Writing to this mentor in August he tells him: "I need you like a cold shower."

He did need the tonic contact of that great pragmatist, in the hypochondria that obsessed him. The little prescriptions sent him by his mother were of no avail. One suspects that this depression was caused by his secret malady, the syphilis which was inwardly rotting him away. For already in 1850

he had suffered from a recurrence of the disease, and the treatments he plans in his letters of 1858 show that it had broken out again.

This would explain his apathy and his use of drugs to forget a conscience that was ever lashing him for not striving to attain preëminence, his life's goal. He had other things to forget: Poulet-Malassis was pressing him hard to repay monies lent, now needed because the publisher was on the verge of failure. "When a man's nerves are weakened by a host of anxieties and sufferings," Baudelaire writes in February, 1858, "the Devil, in spite of all good resolutions, slips every morning into his brain in the shape of this thought: Why not rest for a day and forget everything; to-night I will perform all the necessary things at once. And then the night comes, one's mind is terrified by the mass of things left undone, a crushing sadness brings on impotence, and the next day the same comedy is enacted in good faith, with the same confidence and the same conscientiousness."

"What is it, to give oneself to the Devil?" asks Baudelaire in his diary. In the "Paradis artificiels" he replies: "Poison stimulants seem to me not merely one of the most terrible means employed by the Spirit of Darkness to win over and enslave poor humankind, but also one of his most consummate modes of embodying himself." In September of this very year he published the article on hasheesh in which this indictment appears.

But again he recovered his will power, aided

perhaps by his confessor, "Père Beuve." Before the year was over he had settled Jeanne in the Rue de Beautreillis, so as to give himself a lodging at Paris, and sent his books, manuscripts and engravings to his mother, whom he asked for one thing only — a bedroom with a view of the sea. At New Year's he went to her and spent in his new home most of the year of 1859.

Sea air proved to be the best of stimulants. Within his first five weeks at Honfleur he finished his long study of Théophile Gautier, in which he reaffirms his belief in transcendental beauty and in the evocatory sorcery which alone can reveal it by the laws of the universal symbolism — the secret *correspondances* of words.[1] We see why Baudelaire called Gautier master when he says that at his first reading of this writer the exactness of his magic diction made him quiver, and his "admiration engendered a sort of nervous spasm."

This essay he completed in February. At the same time he composed the "Danse macabre" and "Le voyage." Six poems were needed to replace those excised from "Les Fleurs du mal" by the censors; in the next two years he published in magazines more than twenty, including the important "Les petites

[1] Very interesting is a digression on Balzac, which gave Oscar Wilde several epigrams for "Intentions." Balzac's world is less ethereal than Gautier's, says Baudelaire, who sees in the great novelist an impassioned visionary rather than an observer. Balzac creates characters all larger than life provides; in his works even the porters' wives have genius. All his people are guns loaded to the muzzle with will power; they are Balzac himself. At heart however Baudelaire evidently prefers the romantic landscapes and exceptional heroes of Gautier's stories — the type of fiction that he would probably have loved himself to write.

vieilles", "Les sept vieillards", "Le cygne" and "Le voyage", the longest of all. Most of these new poems are more objective; they show that the poet is trying to live in the world of others.

This new world forced upon him by living with his mother was not devoid of exasperating cares. Jeanne, who was then in a hospital because of her excesses, tried to get her month's allowance a second time by denying that she had received it — a trick which made the bilious poet ill with rage. In March he had to visit Paris to see the Salon, and returned from the capital disgusted with his century and its men of letters, whom he sought to forget by burying himself in Montesquieu, Bossuet and Chateaubriand. Then he wrote his hundred-page criticism of the Salon, which he boasted that he had not even seen. Afterward he did admit his single visit, adding that a critic who knew contemporary art needed only to look up with his catalogue the works of the new painters.

In fact, his constant frequentation of the studios made his "Salon" quite as valuable as his other art criticism. He pillories the modern artist, dexterous but lacking in culture and eager only to astonish; he pillories the Naturalists and their Messiah Daguerre, the inventor of photography. Good painting is more than realistic, it makes one dream; the artist must be realistically faithful to his nature and his imagination. For imagination alone teaches the moral significance of line and color. A faculty thus related to the Infinite, imagination alone creates

landscapes that are not mere studies; and Baudelaire regrets the dearth of Romantic landscape with mountain fastnesses and ruined castles or abbeys glassed in dark waters — things which we must invent if they did not exist. Hence he loves Victor Hugo's drawings with their murky mysterious chiaroscuro, whose magic is full of reverie. This magic he finds too in city landscapes with their belfries and factory spires, and tenements which are profoundly moving because of the dramas they hide away. — Indeed the whole "Salon" is a discussion of the rôle of imagination in art; confuting the Realists, Baudelaire would say that the only real things are the things we do not see.[1]

For Baudelaire imagination was the chief of man's faculties and the one faculty indispensable to the artist and the poet. Hence we have to consider the drugs by which he had lashed his imagination to draw from it the visions it held buried in its depths of darkness.

He owed to opium the dazzling landscape pictured in "Rêve parisien" of 1858:

[1] Very personal, if we read between the lines, is his long description of Delacroix's "Ovide chez les Scythes": he is thinking of his own exile from Paris. Delacroix paints the intimate side of the intellect and puts the infinite into the finite — which is also true of Baudelaire. Another personal note is the critic's love of the grandiose: of huge landscapes, tall men and women: we remember the sonnet "La géante." He is keen enough to remark the pretentious pedantry of Millet's self-conscious "disinherited" peasants; he speaks of the fatiguing brilliancy of Théodore Rousseau's landscapes and the lack of vigor and luminosity in Corot's. Interesting too are his mentions of the statues which inspired "Danse macabre" and "Le masque"; no less so is a reference which shows that the retiarius in Gérôme's "Siècle d'Auguste" gave him a metaphor for "Le voyage."

A Babel, full of stairs, arcades,
It was a palace manifold,
With fountains filled and fair cascades
That fell in dull or burnished gold;

Vast heavy cataracts were hung
Like crystalline and limpid palls
Of dazzling tapestry, that clung
Close to the gleaming metal walls. . . . .

Girt 'round by marbles green or rose,
In calmest blue the wavelets curled
For distances that no one knows
Tow'rd the far borders of the world;

All colors in the stones were blent,
All magic in the pools; they were
Great mirrors glazed with wonderment
By all that they reflected there!

Indifferent and taciturn,
Floods, larger than the Ganges is,
Poured from the heavens' giant urn
Down to a diamond abyss.

For I, the builder of my dream,
Whenever I decreed it so,
Through vaults with precious stones agleam
Could make a conquered ocean flow. . . .

When he composed these stanzas he was taking opium or laudanum, as we can see by his letters. They also attest the worries that drove him to seek oblivion. He wrote to Poulet-Malassis in 1859: "Your 3,000 francs keep me from sleeping." Yet in 1860 he tried to borrow five hundred francs more

when he was stranded at Paris and eager to return to Honfleur. In that summer he could neither sleep nor work because of his *atonie*.

It was these attacks of apathy that made him go back to laudanum, which he had used so long that he was able to take one hundred and fifty drops at a time. He probably justified himself, during the winter of 1858–1859, by his need of making fresh experiments on the effects of the drug, for he had conceived the idea of translating De Quincey's "Opium Eater" and publishing with it his own experiences with hasheesh, under the inclusive title of the "Paradis artificiels." Already in 1851 he had written an article comparing wine and hasheesh as "means of multiplying the personality"; now he made a larger synthesis of artificial methods of attaining to the infinite, expanding his first article into the one published in September, 1858, and finally into the book which followed in July, 1860.

The book begins with a warning worthy of one who considered drugs a device of the Devil: Baudelaire condemns all these artificial modes of attaining paradise because of the terrible price they exact from the body and from the will. Men resort to them to escape from reality, to flee a living hell; but better than all these bought dreams are the high days of the mind, the days when perfect health and a deeper harmony in our faculties make the world wonderful, and give us the vision which reads it as a magic book of transparent symbols.

Baudelaire even denies the inspirational effects of

the drug, confessing that the poison only liberates the subconscious within us, and that like the wonders of dreams, their marvels lose their glory in the cold light of the morrow. But images engendered might well be remembered afterward and all readers of "Les Fleurs du mal" can see that his verses gained from opium a certain feverish luster.

For all of this chapter on hasheesh which he added to his condensed translation of De Quincey — a chapter which mainly concerns us here — is a confession. He avoids the first person from fear of further difficulties with the censors, but the type of subject he assumes in order to depict the effects of hasheesh is an idealized portrait of himself. For his experiment he would choose "a temperament partly nervous, partly bilious, cultivated intellectually, tender-hearted, a sinner quick to remorse or regret, a lover of metaphysics and of that ideal of virtue which was impressed upon his childhood, a man of very delicate senses."

What did his verses obtain from hasheesh? In the reveries induced by the drug he remarks especially the splendor added to forms and colors, by an intense sharpening of all the subject's senses. He tells of the confusion of sense-impressions which make him perceive sounds as colors, colors as music. He notes the hallucination of vision which changes objects into speaking symbols: "Fourier and Swedenborg, one with his *analogies*, the other with his *correspondances*, have become incarnate in the plant and animal which happen to be before your eyes,

and instead of teaching you orally they give you their doctrine by means of form and color." One perceives the *correspondances* of all things in allegories easy to read, and we at once remember his famous sonnet.

He describes his power of creating his dreams, confessed in a stanza of "Rêve parisien", and of merging with them until the seer becomes the object of his ecstatic gaze: the subjective world blends for him with the objective:

> I am the wound and I the knife!
> I am the blow I give, and feel!
> I am the tortured limbs, the wheel,
> The hangman and the strangled life!

The poet had experienced that merging when he wrote "L'héautontimoroumenos."

Visions of limpid waters, of mirrors, of playing fountains and the moveless blue immensity of the sea (how many poems use these images!) furnish pretexts for reveries; one feels incapable of all action (as in "La cloche fêlée") yet filled with will power; Time and Space grow into monstrous abysses; infinity and eternity are all about one. — These figures recur constantly in his verses. — When memories act as stimuli, we read in the "Paradis", remorse itself may become a source of self-gratification and pleasure, for the unifying spell of the drug demands the casuistic blotting out of this contradiction; the adept sees himself changed into the most virtuous of men, he becomes the center of a universe created

solely for his enjoyment, and, finally, its deity. — Alas! only by literally drugging his conscience to sleep could Baudelaire lift his soul out of an insignificance so deeply felt that while dreaming he had to imagine himself a god.

The curious reader may be left to discover even more resemblances between this prose description of Baudelaire's purchased dreams and "Les Fleurs du mal." Not only here but in "Rêve parisien" is depicted the horror of his awakening, which makes ordinary existence more intolerable than ever:

> But, as I opened dazzled eyes,
> I saw my hateful, tawdry lair,
> And felt within my breast arise
> The barb of each accursèd care,
>
> Noon tolled its awful notes of doom,
> Dully the web of time unfurled,
> And the dark heavens spread their gloom
> Over my numb and dreary world.

But this is not all. Even in waking life Baudelaire the drug addict had his hallucinations, and we can find many in the poems he is now composing. What was the experience related in "Les sept vieillards" but a walking nightmare? "Les aveugles" is another hallucination, and "Danse macabre" with its vision of a woman's skeleton decked out for a ball. Again, as in his youth, the poet is obsessed by the idea of a living death, and describes it in "Le squelette laboureur", suggested by the pictures of spading skeletons he has seen in the book-boxes of the quays:

Would ye (a proof in miniature
Of an intolerable doom!)
Teach us that even in the tomb
Our promised sleep is not secure;

That all is false, the grave, the worm;
That even Death has toil in store,
And that perhaps forevermore
'Twill be our fate, as ye affirm,

In lands of loneliness complete
To till some rocky counterscarp
And push a heavy spade and sharp
Beneath our naked bleeding feet?

This reaches an insanity of morbid realism which betrays his quivering nerves. In vain does the poet cry in "Danse macabre": "The charms of horror thrill only the strong!" In vain does he proclaim in "L'horreur sympathique" his joy in horror, or in "L'alchimie de la douleur" explain his temperament:

One lends to thee his heart elate,
O Nature, one his soul of gloom;
What moans to one man: Lo! the Tomb!
Cries: Life and Splendor! to his mate.

O mage unknown in whom consists
My art, — O dreaded master, see,
I am like Midas, thanks to thee,
— That piteous king of alchemists:

Through thee I turn my gold to steel,
My heaven into hell. I feel
Her palls of cloud will not restore

The dead loved faces they conceal,
And I, on that celestial shore,
Carve mausoleums evermore.

In vain does he pride himself on his idiosyncrasy; he is now its victim: that is plain in these new poems written in his late thirties. He has cultivated his nerves so desperately that even Nature rejects him from the bosom of her sympathy, and sleep itself is but an interval of horror. Only after days of debauch could he have written "Obsession."

> Deep woods, ye fright me like cathedrals hoar
> And howling organs; in my cursèd heart,
> Where gasp my dead and tears eternal start,
> Your *De Profundis* rumbles evermore.
>
> I hate thee, Ocean! For I toss, nor sleep,
> Like thee: I hear the sobs and jeers and dole
> — The gall long pent in man's defeated soul —
> Shriek in the screaming laughter of the deep.
>
> How I would love thee, Night! — without one star,
> Clear beacon that we know, nor dare avoid!
> For what I crave is bare, and black, and void!
>
> But murk itself provides a screen afar,
> Where, spirting from mine eyes in legions, blaze
> Lost faces staring with familiar gaze.

His is now the mood of "Le goût du Néant", an utter lethargy and ennui burdened by the overwhelming weight of time; this poem again depicts the coma of one slowly freezing to death under never ceasing snows. And every moment his conscience is gnawing at his heart, while the clock warns him that it will soon be too late forever. Baudelaire has clearly never forgotten that terrible moment in childhood, when his mother told him that time could not turn back:

Take heed! Et souviens-toi! Esto memor!
(My metal gullet calls in every tongue.)
The moments, wastrel, never should be flung
Aside, their gold ungathered from the ore!

Take heed no die that niggard Time can throw
But falls against thee! thus it is decreed.
The day declines; the night comes on; *take heed!*
Wide gapes the gulf; the water-clock runs low.

Soon tolls the hour when God's Chance goes by,
When Virtue, august but unwedded spouse,
When ev'n Repentance (Life's last Hostel-house!)
All, all shall shout: "Too late! Die, coward, die!"

To die with his work unfinished is the dread that was soon to fill his letters to his mother: to die knowing that he had not expressed what he had yet to say.

Such is the burden of the new poems he was now writing for the second edition of his poetic testament, expanding the text "Pulvis eris." It took Madame Sabatier and all the lost illusions of 1857, his vain dreams of love and fame and the satisfaction of winning his self-respect, to round out his volume with these tragic motifs. It took the disillusionment of maturity to give his poetry its deeper notes, which reverberate within us like the cold bronze bourdon of life's maturity.

What is now the poet's conception of love? A purely subjective illusion, nourished by the senses and gilded by the false fervor of the imagination:

You ask: "What floods of gloom engulf you — strange
As creeping tides against a bare black wall?"
When hearts have crushed their grapes in Love's exchange,
Life is an ulcer. Secret known to all,

'Tis but the common grief that man betrays
To all, as you your joy, in eye and brow.
So veil, my fair one, your inquiring gaze!
And though your voice is low, be silent now!

Be silent, simple soul, forever gay
With girlish laughter! More than Life, to-day,
Death binds our hearts in tenuous webs of doom.

Let mine be drunken with the wine of *lies*,
Leave me to delve for dreams in those deep eyes,
And slumber long beneath your eyebrows' gloom!

Even love's physical joys have lost their savor; now his longing is for the calmer warmth of affection. "Let us love gently", he entreats in the "Sonnet d'automne", and in the "Chant d'automne" he reveals still more plainly his thirst for a maternal love. For in the background hovers a specter far more real than the fictive visions he had evoked in youth to spice his lyrics:

Yet love me, tender heart, as mothers love
Even a thankless or a wicked son;
Mistress or sister, shed the sweetness of
A clear brief autumn or a setting sun.

'Twill not be long! The hungry tomb awaits! . . .

Death is waiting for him, shutting off a vision of future years and turning him back toward the vision of his past.

His gaze turns backward to Jeanne. Madame Sabatier and other loves have come to him since his twenties, but the verses they have inspired do not compare with the four sonnets entitled "Un fantôme." These sonnets picture the girl as he first saw her, "dark but glimmering", fragrant with musk and "fraught with girlish simian grace", — a lovely ghost which he would fix forever in his heart, now that the original is daily despoiled by the hated wing of Time:

> Death and Disease to ashes turn
> The flames that wrapped our youth around.
> — Of her soft eyes, so quick to burn,
> Her mouth, wherein my heart was drowned,
>
> Of her wild kisses' tyrannies,
> Her passion, hot, implacable, —
> O heart! what have I left of these?
> Only a faded old pastel
>
> Dying, like me, in loneliness,
> Duller each day in every part,
> For Time's rude wing is merciless. . . .
>
> Black murderer of Life and Art,
> Never shalt thou destroy in me
> Her, once my boast and ecstasy!

He also turns back to his glimpse of the tropics in his twenty-first year. The perfume of Jeanne's hair had always evoked that vision, as we can see in "Parfum exotique"; but how pale the sonnet seems beside the mirage presented in "La chevelure" — that "lost world" of his youth, the seaport filled with flashing waves and mighty ships, regaling all his senses as yet undulled by life:

O blue-black tresses, dark mysterious tent,
Ye give me back vast azure skies afar;
Along their rippling marge, in ravishment,
I breathe from glossy braids an odor blent
From oil of coconuts and musk and tar.

Now and forevermore, when day is born,
I'll strew this mane with pearls and rubies fine;
My love shall find thee listening, night and morn!
Art not the oasis where I dream, the horn
Where I inhale long draughts of memory's wine?

With her remembered scents Jeanne evoked another illusion. Now that his mother's feeble health chained him to France, all the poet's longings take wing down the blue Channel, seen from the garden of their cottage by the sea — take wing toward the ships sailing from Le Havre for the East. In spirit he embarks for the lands which to his imagination offer a respite and an escape from Reality. Would he spend his life in travel "far from Paris, dark and filthy sea", like his friend Maxime DuCamp, the tireless rover to whom he dedicates "Le voyage?" No: travel could not fail to bring him disillusion like everything else. Man is tortured by his illusions and sent racing over the earth, but on exotic shores he discovers the same men and women as at home, and bluer skies dome the same Vision of Sin:

The traveller finds the earth a bitter school!
A dwindled waste, which boredom amplifies,
Where trite oases, in each muddy pool,
Glass but the horror lurking in his eyes!

Must we depart? remain? If needs be, go;
Stay if ye can. One runs, another hides
To cheat that vigilant, remorseless foe,
Old Time! And runners tireless, besides,

Like the Apostles or the Wandering Jew,
Have found no courser swift enough to balk
That monster with his net, which others knew
How to destroy before they learned to walk.

But when at last It stands upon our throats,
Then we can shout exulting: Forward now!
As once to far Cathay we launched our boats
With eyes far-set and wind-swept hair and brow,

We shall embark upon the Sea of Night,
Happy as he who first embarks, a boy;
Oh hear the shadowy voices of delight
That chant: "Come hither, ye who would enjoy

The fragrant Lotus! here it is we cull
The fruit your spirits crave, a magic boon;
Come and be drunken with the wonderful
Strange sweetness of this endless afternoon!"

We know the specter by its old behest:
Yonder our mates raise beckoning arms to ours,
"Plunge, love, and cool thy fever on my breast!"
She cries whose knees we kissed in happier hours.

Cast off, old Captain Death! the time has come!
We hate this weary land and would depart!
Though skies and ocean lie in murky gloom,
Thy beckoning flames burn high in every heart!

Pour out, to comfort us, thy poison-brew!
So hot our souls with fires implacable,
Into the Pit unplumbed, to find the New,
We'd plunge, nor care if it were heaven or hell!

Thus ends the augmented second edition of "Les Fleurs du mal", published in 1861. Baudelaire saw that death alone could offer him escape. He had come to know the captain of the vessel he had so often boarded to flee life's horror, the ship of purchased dreams. And the captain had already exacted from his future passenger a payment on account.

For on the thirteenth day of January, 1860, Baudelaire fell unconscious in the streets of Paris, the victim of his first congestion of the brain.

XI · RED DAWN AT FORTY

The attack passed, thanks to the "singular remedies" employed by the old woman who played the Good Samaritan, but it was followed by another fit accompanied by nausea and vertigo, which left him exhausted as if he had "been on a long journey." Two weeks before he had had a premonition. "I am oppressed by a number of solemn and more than serious thoughts", he wrote his mother just before the New Year's of 1860, ". . . if I were to become incapacitated, or feel my brain failing before I have done all that I think I ought to do and can do!"

What he wanted to do in 1860 was to finish the three books promised to Poulet-Malassis: the "Paradis artificiels", the "Curiosités esthétiques" and "L'Art romantique"; to get on with the "Poèmes nocturnes" (the "Poèmes en prose"); to complete and publish the second edition of "Les Fleurs du mal", and to reduce his debts by a success on the stage, with one of those plays which he was always talking about, but never wrote. What he actually published this year was practically all written during the two preceding years: the "Paradis artificiels" and a few poems for the new edition of his verses.

There was some difficulty about the former volume which was already in press. Poulet-Malassis wanted to put at the end of the book the advertisement of a druggist who sold a preparation of opium, and

who, in return, promised to purchase two hundred copies. In his weakness Baudelaire dallied with the project awhile, but his sense of proprieties and his dread of further prosecution made him finally refuse his consent.

He needed money of course, as always, not only for himself but now for his hard-pressed publisher-creditor, and only this need of helping a friend can palliate for us his vacillation. From Paris he had already drawn sight drafts on his mother at Honfleur; and in March he did so again, even after she had written him that despite his kindness she feared that he "would bring her to ruin." She urged him to return to her and sent him her cashmere shawl to sell in his extremity. But he could not summon up will power to finish his tasks and depart.

He drifted, for he was enjoying life as well as suffering from it — a fact which we forget if we read too exclusively his letters to his mother. When in funds, he still dined like an epicure with Poulet-Malassis, who loved to go to the market and choose a carp, which he would take to a favorite restaurant to cook, personally, in Rhine wine. And in February, Baudelaire enjoyed the revelation of Wagner's music, at that famous first concert in Paris which presented selections from the operas. "Not for fifteen years have I felt so swept away", he writes, comparing the experience with his discovery of Delacroix or of Edgar Poe.

Then he found a new muse. A fortune-teller had promised him that he was "going to meet a very

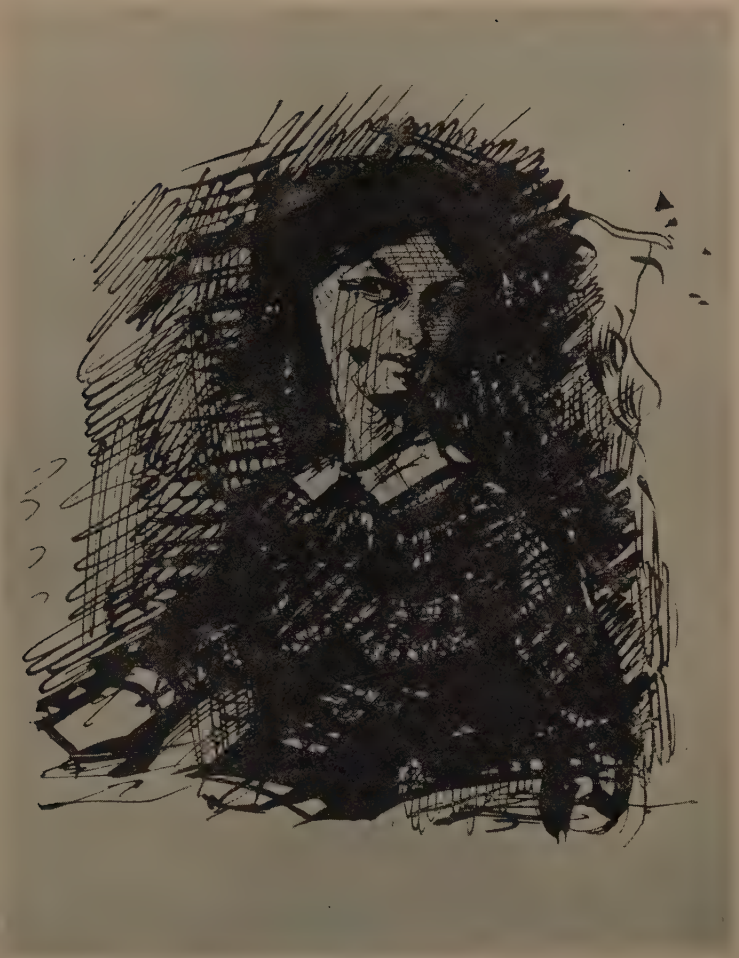
tall, very slender, very dark girl." On May third he wrote Poulet-Malassis: "I have met her." And in this letter he adds that the "Paradis artificiels" are to be dedicated to J. G. F.

Who was the mysterious J. G. F.? In the dedication she appears as a genius of tenderness and melancholy, who once "wiped away the sweat" from his fevered forehead, and who is now an Electra living in his brain and "projecting her celestial light in it." She is ill or ailing, but like the poet she has learned how to draw new and subtle joys from suffering; hence he also dedicates to her, in the second edition of the poems, "L'héautontimoroumenos" — the "Man who punishes himself" so as to wring from his nerves their last jangled chords. All this indicates another dream-love, probably an actress. For in the same month Baudelaire published a poem to an actress, "L'amour du mensonge", which may be a portrait of J. G. F.

When I behold thee, queen of nonchalance,
While from the dome the shards of music fall,
Thy feet that slowly weave a weary dance,
Thy gaze a wearier flood engulfing all,

And when I watch thy brow, so pale and wan,
Yet haunting in the gaslight's warm disguise,
Where evening's torches paint the rose of dawn,
Thine eyes that hold me like a portrait's eyes,

I cry: O rose bizarre, now bloomed afresh!
For royal memories crown her, towering, vast,
And all her heart's a fruit, whose bruisèd flesh
Is, like her body, ripe for love at last.



DRAWING BY BAUDELAIRE (J.G.F.?)

Art thou October fruit of sovereign wiles?
Art thou an urn for Sorrow's tearful hours?
A fragrance wafting me to slumberous isles,
A roseleaf bed or funeral wreath of flowers?

I know that there are eyes that seem to mourn
Wherein no secret pearl of sorrow lies;
Fair empty caskets that no gems adorn,
As deep and bottomless as ye, O skies!

But is it not enough that thou should'st be
This nectar in my soul, with truth at war?
What is thy shallow nonchalance to me?
Hail, mask of Art! thy beauty I adore.

Certainly this is a poem such as one might write to an actress, loved from afar until her image had become an erotic fetish, and it may be the poem by which Baudelaire, grown bolder since his affair with Madame Sabatier, made the acquaintance of his new Beatrice.

Very tall and thin and dark, J. G. F. resembled in these respects Jeanne Duval. the "royal memories" she evokes can only be memories of the lovely "Fantôme" that still visited his dreams. Like Flaubert and other victims of Romantic love Baudelaire confesses himself in his statement that "many a poet has pursued again and again in different liaisons the image of one woman alone." He portrayed this ideal of his in a pen sketch of a woman who resembles Jeanne in her first dark slenderness, and who makes one think of a page in the diaries by her beauty; it is also "ardent and sad" and "vague in expression, giving free rein to conjecture." For this

is Baudelaire's dream: "A seductive and beautiful head, a woman's head, I mean, is one that makes you dream at the same time, but confusedly, of pleasure and sadness — which contains a thought of melancholy, of lassitude and even of satiety — or the opposite idea, that is, an ardor, a desire to live, associated with a resurgent bitterness, coming as it were from privation or lack of hope. Mystery and regret are also characteristic of the Beautiful." This tallies with the pen sketch and it may be possible to identify J. G. F. by searching the registers of the minor theaters of Paris.

But the Dedication to the "Paradis artificiels" gives us more significant facts than those concerning this mysterious lady. For there we find: "What does it matter that a dedication be understood, or a book, except by the one for whom it was composed? . . . I have so little taste for the world of the living . . . that I would rather write only for the dead."

This is hardly the mood in which most authors complete a book. And besides this volume the author had all but finished the second edition of his poems, after months of vain attempts to make the engraver Bracquemond comprehend his idea of a frontispiece — an arborescent skeleton, with the Capital Sins represented as flowers. Baudelaire had evidently too many second thoughts to find any joy in a book's completion. With his occupation gone, an immense apathy fell upon him again, just as in 1857. Was it lack of success or weariness that made the new task seem insuperable?

He did finish that summer the three articles on Constantin Guys the illustrator, articles which were not published until 1863. Yet things were not going well with him. "I need to see you", he wrote Sainte-Beuve, "as Antæus needed the contact of the earth." He asked the still hesitating critic for an article on the newly published "Paradis artificiels" — an article which he did not obtain. He stayed on at Paris unable to work or sleep — an indication of his mental condition. His letters show him worrying over his mother's feeble health, over his digestion, so poor that he often vomited "even while fasting, and without fears and anxieties." His chief torture is his debts, and his chief torturer Ancelle, "who considers that everything can be arranged by fine speeches and *with time*."

He is ill and he has made his mother ill: such are his vain self-reproaches in August. He is so ill that he at last confesses to her the disease which has been his secret for twenty years. It has now broken out in a new form, he writes, the eruptions, ugly enough to keep him from calling on Madame Sabatier, are accompanied by "an extraordinary lassitude in his joints." And moved by the fact that he had again contemplated suicide, "again conceived a desire for death", he reveals all the passionate love he had felt for his mother as a child, before her second marriage. She must come to Paris to see him. She must free him from his tutelage to the notary. "I beg of you, come, come. I have reached the end of my nervous resistance, the end of my courage,

the end of my hope. . . . I don't know what I would not give to see you, to kiss you." If she will become his creditor instead of Ancelle, he promises her all that he will earn, and he will relinquish his principal to pay his creditors and provide an income for Jeanne.

The confession made in this letter is fully confirmed by another letter to Poulet-Malassis, written in December, 1860:

"For a rather long time I have been on the brink of suicide. What holds me back is a reason different from cowardice and even from regret. It is my pride which keeps me from leaving my affairs in a mess. *I should leave enough to pay*, but there would have to be careful notes for the one in charge of settling up everything. I am not, as you know, either a sniveller or a liar. But during the last two months especially I have fallen into an alarming atony and despair. I feel that I am attacked by a sort of malady such as Gérard's,[1] to wit, the fear of no longer being able to think or write a line. Only four days ago did I succeed in finding out that I was not dead in that respect."

This was another winter of extreme penury and need for Baudelaire. He had failed to get from an American musician then at Paris, Robert Stœpel, the fifteen hundred francs he had expected for a translation from Longfellow, to be set to music by the composer. His plan for a fine illustrated edition of Poe's works had fallen through. Though impelled

[1] Gérard de Nerval.

by kindness rather than hope of gain, he had not been able to persuade the half-mad old etcher Méryon to let him publish his etchings of Paris accompanied by the sketches which later became the "Poèmes en prose." His dramas were not written. He was being slandered in the press. He lived in constant dread of receiving sight drafts from Poulet-Malassis.

"To-morrow I shall doubtless receive an impatient letter from you", he writes him in mid-January, 1861. "I shall open it only with trepidation. A letter, a ring at my door, a trifle makes me jump in the air. My will power is in a pitiful state, and if — as a measure of hygiene and despite everything, I do not plunge into my work, I am lost."

At the end of March he sends his mother a letter written a month — perhaps two months — before, as in his condition he has no recollection of passing days or weeks. "Is there still time for us to be happy?" he asks her: "I no longer dare to believe it. Forty years old, my guardianship, enormous debts, and finally, worse than everything, my will power forever lost, rotted away. Who knows whether my mind itself is not impaired? I do not know, I cannot find out, because I have lost my power to try."

Even her affection, he adds, does not give him strength to pick himself up. "I contemplate the past years, the horrible years, I spend my time reflecting on the shortness of life, nothing but that, and my will power goes on rusting forevermore. If ever a man still young came to know spleen and hypochondria, it is certainly I. Yet I desire to live, and

would like for a little while to know security, glory and self-satisfaction. Something terrible tells me: *Never*, and yet something else tells me: *Try*."

In July, 1861, the second edition of "Les Fleurs du mal" was at last published, with the author's portrait substituted for the symbolic frontispiece. With this volume Baudelaire confessed himself "almost satisfied, for the first time" in his life. "It will remain, this book, as a proof of my disgust and hatred of everything." But he had fallen into "a sort of nervous panic", with "frightful dreams and frightful awakenings"; he had not even the strength to send out the review copies lying on his table.

"In this horrible mood, this impotence and hypochondria, the thought of suicide came back. Now I can say that it has gone by, but at every moment of the day it tormented me. In it I saw an absolute deliverance, a deliverance from everything. At the same time, and *for three months now*, by a strange and superficial contradiction, I have *every hour* been praying (to whom? to what infinite thing? I absolutely do not know), to obtain two things: for me, strength to live on, and for you, many long years. . . .

"Finally the *idée fixe* disappeared, driven away by a violent and inescapable task, the Wagner article, improvised in three days in a printing office. Without the obsessing noise of the presses, I would never have had the power to do it. Since then I have again fallen ill with inanition, horror and fear. . . . When I am dozing off and even in my sleep, I hear voices very distinctly, complete sentences."

Again he sent her his poems, which she treated as his critics had done. She blamed him for republishing them, and wrote him that she wished she were dead. "Your death would be the finishing stroke for me", he replied. He had sent a copy to her confessor, with whom he had made friends at Honfleur, and the priest had burned it like a book condemned by the Inquisition. Possibly these were some of the reasons for the sense of frustration that made him think only of deliverance. Yet he did not wish to end it all before he had published at least his works of criticism, and with them, a book in which he would "heap up all his anger", "Mon cœur mis à nu." The title was given him by Poe in the "Marginalia." — "Ah! if ever that book sees the light, Rousseau's 'Confessions' will seem pale beside it!"

Baudelaire prayed. He who had written in his diary that God was "a profitable scandal" prayed to the God he had adored and cursed, and when his mother evidently exhorted him to believe, replied: "I desire with all my heart to believe in a God interested in my destiny, but what shall I do to believe in Him?"

But he needed human succor, he wanted to be freed from his debts. "I need to be saved," he writes his mother: "and only you can save me. . . . I am alone, without friends, without a mistress, without a dog or cat; whom can I complain to? I have nothing but my father's portrait, and it is always mute. I have fallen into that horrible mood which I

experienced in the autumn of 1844, a resignation worse than fury." It was in 1844 that his rights over his fortune were taken away from him.

In May, 1861, another cause of his sense of frustration comes out in the letters. Months before he had established Jeanne in an apartment at Neuilly. Then her brother had turned up and made himself a parasitic guest. When Baudelaire went there to see her, for "one always has something to tell a woman one has lived with for nineteen years", he would find her taken up with this brother, who would not leave them alone a moment. Because of this, the poet showed his intention of abandoning Jeanne to him, whereupon the intruder refused to help his sister and added that when a man takes a mistress he must expect to pay. Furious with anger Baudelaire had naturally withdrawn; the brother had put her in a hospital, sold part of her furniture and decamped; she was forced to sell the rest to pay her debts.

So Baudelaire in his penury and need considered selling his rights to the three volumes of the Poe translation. As those who think most of money are those who do not possess it, he spent hour after hour of valuable time making calculations on paper, to find a way to absolve his debts and obtain security. "Meanwhile life runs on with a heart-rending rapidity", he confesses: "In these very dreams of money I find a symptom of my old age."

Another specter familiar to old age made him announce his candidacy for the French Academy. Doubt of himself urged him to seek a rehabilitation. Four

years before he had longed to belong to the Légion d'honneur — a thing made impossible by his public statement that since the ribbon was probably worth five hundred francs to an author they might give him the money! But the Academy was different; it was "the only honor which a genuine man of letters could solicit without blushing."

By December he had already made several of the obligatory calls upon the Academicians, to declare his candidacy and ask their support. And he reports: "The lucky thing about that tiresome business is that I have become interested in it. Now one can not live without a mania, without a hobby." He could not live without a hobby, or make a hobby of his life work, literature, because it had brought no satisfaction to his struggling spirit, no salving of his dignity.

Lamartine tried to dissuade him from his project, Mérimée avoided seeing him, Villemain treated him so uppishly that Baudelaire wrote a thirty-page outline of an article flaying the professor, which gave relief to the poet's resentment and was left uncompleted. The press received his candidacy with jeers; his friends thought him a renegade who had deserted the cause of the liberals. Flaubert disapproved. Baudelaire replied to him: "How is it you haven't guessed that Baudelaire means Auguste Barbier, Théophile Gautier, Flaubert, Leconte de Lisle: that is, simply *literature?*"

Sainte-Beuve at first held back. But he could not refuse to mention the poet in an article on the candidates, published in January in *Le Constitutionnel:*

"M. Baudelaire has found a way to build for himself, on the very tip of a tongue of land hitherto held as uninhabitable, a bizarre kiosk, very wilfully strange, but dainty and mysterious. . . . This singular kiosk . . . which for some time has attracted glances toward the extreme point of the Kamchatka of Romanticism, I call Baudelaire's Folly." No Academician could have considered such faint praise as anything but damning.

Then, when Baudelaire announced that he was a candidate not for Scribe's chair but for that left vacant by the death of Lacordaire, Sainte-Beuve wrote him: "Leave the Academy as it is, more surprised than shocked, and do not shock it by returning to the charge over a corpse like Lacordaire's." So the would-be Immortal could only retire; to offend the critic would have been to commit literary suicide.

What Baudelaire gained from his candidacy was perhaps enough. He made a friend of Alfred de Vigny, who received him as an equal and kept him for three hours, besides asking him to call again. Such consideration from one of the greatest poets of the century, already acclaimed as master by all the Parnassian school, restored for the moment Baudelaire's self-esteem; after his visit he sent Vigny the last copy of his poems on fine paper that he possessed. When the master praised his verses he forgot one of the objects of his second call — to tell him where he could get good ale for his failing digestion; so he wrote him again to indicate certain taverns where they sold Bass, and yet again to

recommend a kind of meat jelly which even Vigny — who was to die of cancer — could probably digest.

Yet Baudelaire's own mood was somber. One of the periodicals that he sent his new friend contained the poem "Le coucher du soleil romantique", which reveals a pitiful desire to escape from the present into the past:

> How bright the sun-god when his first sharp gleam
> Hurls a "good morning" like a bursting shell!
> — But blessed he whose love, unshakable,
> Can hail the sunset glorious as a dream!
>
> All, all comes back! I've seen field, flower and stream
> Pant like a heart beneath that flaming eye. . . .
> Haste to the topmost hill, 'tis late; oh, fly
> To catch perchance one last low slanting beam!
>
> But I pursue the fugitive god in vain:
> The dark resistless Night now starts to reign,
> Black, moist and death-fraught, full of shudderings;
>
> Dank tomb-like odors through the twilight steal,
> And mazed in fens, I press with fearful heel
> Cold unguessed toads and clammy creeping things.

Eleven days after this sonnet appeared in print the poet wrote in his diary: "I have cultivated my hysteria with joy and terror. Now, I always have vertigo, and to-day, January 23, 1862, I underwent a singular warning. I felt pass over me a gust from the wing of insanity."

After the Wagner concerts and the meeting with J. G. F., Baudelaire's moments of escape from the

present had been few. His only respites had been his hours spent in writing, long dreaded as they were.

There was first of all the Wagner article, which he had put off doing for thirteen months, and which had at last freed him from a lethargy which he feared was intellectual paralysis. He had been present at Wagner's first concerts in Paris on the first and eighth of February, 1860, at the Théâtre Italien, and had heard in the foyer the disputes which, according to Berlioz, "always seemed about to degenerate into blows." And at these concerts, which presented only bits of the master's work, without the aid of singers or a background, his pleasure "had been so great and so terrible" that he had sought the acquaintance of the composer and pursued his music in all the music halls where it could be heard.

What he felt in that music he did not at first understand. He knew the shadowy melodies of Weber and the tragic themes of Beethoven, but here was something which, he confesses, "I was powerless to define, and that impotence caused me anger and curiosity mingled with a strange delight." He soon saw that in the music of Wagner a new art was revealed, an art analogous to his own, an art which, despite its vagueness, suggested to different listeners the same general effects of light and color and even the same visual images.

This he proves by the overture of "Lohengrin", comparing the description given by the composer and the impression received by Liszt with his own

impression at that first hearing, when, with eyes closed, he "felt literally lifted up from the ground." The resemblances are more than striking, but more striking is the fact that this concert, together with Wagner's "Lettre sur la musique", made Baudelaire first realize that he himself had done in poetry what Wagner was doing in music.

He had done the same thing unconsciously in "Les Fleurs du mal"; this realization is seen in an unfinished preface to the second edition of the poems, in which he had planned to show:

"How poetry touches music through a prosody whose roots plunge deeper into the human soul than any classicist theory indicates;

"How French possesses a mysterious and misunderstood prosody, like the Latin and English languages; . . . .

"That the poetical phrase can imitate (and in this respect it touches the art of music and the science of mathematics) the horizontal line, the ascending straight line, the descending straight line; that it can rise perpendicularly toward heaven, without effort, or descend perpendicularly toward hell . . .; that it can follow the spiral, describe the parabola or the zigzag. . . .

"That poetry is connected with the arts of painting, of cooking and of cosmetics by its potential faculty of expressing any sensation of suavity or bitterness, of beatitude or horror, by coupling this or that substantive with this or that adjective, analogous or contrary." And he boasts that he can

teach any man how to write poetry "in twenty lessons", a *boutade* clearly inspired by Poe's quizzical essay.

This preface, however, was never published, and with this lethargy the Wagner article itself would never have been written or published, if thirteen months after the first concert Baudelaire's indignation at the reception of "Tannhäuser" had not set him to writing. With the hisses of the public still sounding in his ears, he penned his article, because Tannhäuser was a restatement of what he had put in his poems, presented in a myth which allowed the listener to dream:

"'Tannhäuser' represents the struggle of the two principles which have chosen for their chief battlefield the heart of man: the war of the flesh against the spirit, of Hell against Heaven, of Satan against God. And this duality is set forth with incomparable skill at the very beginning, in the Overture. . . . The Overture sums up the thought of the drama by two themes, one religious and the other voluptuous, 'two goals', to use the words of Liszt, 'which in the finale find their equation.' First appears the Pilgrims' Chorus, with the authority of Supreme Law, marking as it were immediately the real meaning of life, the goal of the universal pilgrimage, God. But as the inner realization of God is soon drowned out in every conscience by the lusts of the flesh, the song that stands for holiness is little by little submerged by the sighs of carnal joy. The universal Venus, actual and terrible, already lifts her form in

every imagination. . . . Languors, delights mingled with fever and cut short by anguish, incessant turns toward a joy which promises to quench thirst but never does, furious palpitations of the heart and the senses, the imperious commands of the flesh — all the dictionary of the melodious cries of love is now heard. Finally the religious theme little by little resumes its sway, slowly, gradually, and absorbs the other in a peaceful and glorious victory. . . .

"Whence did the master draw this furious chant of the flesh, his absolute knowledge of the diabolic side of man? With the very first measures the nerves are alive, in unison with the melody; all our reminiscent flesh begins to quiver. Every complete man bears within himself two infinities, Heaven and Hell, and in each image of one of these infinities he suddenly recognizes the other half of himself. To the Satanic titillations of a vague passion soon succeed moments when one is swept away or blinded with light, cries of victory, groans of gratitude, and then howls of ferocity, reproaches of the victims and impious hosannas of the immolators, as if barbarity must always have its place in the drama of love, and the joys of the flesh must lead one by an ineluctable Satanic logic to the delights of crime. When the religious theme, making its invasion through the loosed forces of Evil, comes little by little to restore order and resume its sway, when it again lifts its head with all its unshaken beauty over that chaos of agonizing joys, the whole soul feels as it were refreshed, feels the blessings of redemption."

It was directly after he had heard "Tannhäuser" that Baudelaire began to pray again, after so many years.

The Wagner article was published in the *Revue européenne;* by adding a few more pages the author made of it a brochure of seventy pages, which also appeared in 1861.

In the same year he wrote for the *Revue fantaisiste* a series of nine short articles: "Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains", which were later reprinted in Crépet's "Anthologie des poètes français." These essays set forth Baudelaire's canons of literary criticism at forty; from them we may restate his credo:

All things are hieroglyphics; the poet's task is to decipher them, to read the analogies or *correspondances* that make up the universe, to express the mysteries of life, and to express them with an indispensable obscurity, such as Victor Hugo's. He must be a master of his instrument, a master of his rhymes, whose proper choice can alone satisfy our instinctive needs of surprise and symmetry. He may be a moralist, but only involuntarily and out of the plenitude of his nature.

This is familiar, but new notes appear on other pages — notes which add to our portrait of the critic. He speaks of the pensiveness of English poetry, of the rhythm of Leconte de Lisle, whose verse has the

soft, broad deep tone of a contralto voice. He loves the passionate light with which his poems are flooded, and finds in their quality of repose a principle of beauty. He praises his imitations of Greek poets, but states his own preference for the Latin conception of form: this preference explains the marvellously concentrated verse of "Les Fleurs du mal."

There is a certain wistfulness in Baudelaire's admiration for Banville, whose poems "reflect the beautiful hours of life, the intense, almost supernatural moods when the spirit is lifted up from the earth and forced to sing." And there is a glimpse of his own youth in all its sentimentality — of the days when he admired Musset — in his outspoken praise of Madame Desbordes-Valmore. Her poetry seems to him like a luxuriant garden, an English garden filled with trees and ponds and Gothic ruins, whose wilting flowers revive at once under the reader's involuntary flood of tears.

Again, he shows the sadistic nature of his Romantic revolt by his unchanging appreciation of Pétrus Borel the Lycanthrope, who has for him the vigor of the English novelist Maturin, together with an explosive sonority and a color almost primitive in its intensity. He too had aimed at these ideals no less than Borel. He also loves Borel for his hatred of Philistinism and his sympathy for excess, "for all that is intense, pessimistic and Byronic." "In the things of art I do not hate exaggeration", he had

said in the Wagner article; "moderation has never seemed to me the earmark of a vigorous artistic nature."

Yet he can also admire Leconte de Lisle's intellectual aristocracy, sympathize with "his disgust of transitory things, and the badinage of life"; he can appreciate his "infinite love for the unchangeable and the eternal, for *le divin Néant*." Leconte de Lisle is one of those who feel for everything that is not superior a contempt so tranquil that it does not even deign to express itself. Not so Baudelaire; he must vent his anger.

The critic depicts his ideal self by the qualities he most admires in his subjects; and he often shows his real self by the things he scourges most vigorously. We feel this when Baudelaire comments upon the vices and sloth of the Romantic wastrel Hippolite Moreau, or pitilessly lashes the hero of Cladel's novel "Les Martyrs ridicules", who absolves himself for his sins because he admits them.

Finally, Baudelaire acclaims those who have advanced the frontiers of modern poetry, by turning its light upon the shadows in our souls:

"Beethoven began to stir up the worlds of melancholy and incurable despair amassed like clouds in man's inner heaven." Then came Maturin, Byron and Poe. "They projected dazzling rays of splendor upon the Lucifer that lies hidden in the human heart. I mean that modern art has a tendency essentially demoniac. And it seems to me that the infernal side of man, which man delights in explaining to

himself, is day by day increasing, as if the Devil were amusing himself augmenting it by artificial means, like fatteners of fowls — patiently stuffing mankind in his poultry yard so as to prepare himself more succulent food."

He was justified in his belief in the Devil. In 1862 Jeanne discovered a new way to torture him, in order to obtain money. After wounding his pride by trying to sell his friends the books and engravings he had given her, she wrote to his mother, and his mother reproached him for his "barbarity."

As the diaries show, he still felt the Devil was to blame for his sloth, though he does not absolve himself. "How many years of weariness and punishment", he exclaims at the end of his wasted winter, "it takes to learn the simplest of truths, *i.e.*, that work, which is so unpleasant, is the only means of not suffering, or at least of not suffering from living."

He got "a feeling of fortifying envy" from a call upon Flaubert, whose new novel "Salammbô" he describes as extraordinary in its gesticulative vividness. But none the less he did not finish the Villemain article; his published prose for this year included only two short papers on art and a review of "Les Misérables", and this last article was a duty, because Hugo had written him when he had dedicated "Les petites vieilles" to "V. H.": "You have endowed the heaven of art with an indefinably macabre beam of light; you have created a new shudder."

Life laid hold of him by obligations, although his

nerves now unfitted him for social contacts. He had to go with Ancelle to Fontainebleau, where his half-brother had died, stricken with the paralysis that was hereditary in the family. He had to spend a whole day with the notary and hear him stammer for hours: "You have a very kind mother, haven't you? Are you very fond of your mother?" Or else the notary would preach to him: "Do you believe in God? There is a God, isn't there?"

And Baudelaire adds in his exasperation: "What a life! But I shall avenge myself. I shall avenge myself hugely, like a man who has no love for anything, but who execrates his country."

Naturally his mother tried to get him away from Paris; so he wrote in August that he was coming. "At last, at last I think that at the end of the month I shall be able to flee the horror of human faces. You couldn't believe how degenerate the Parisian tribe has become. It is no longer the charming and amiable society I knew in the past: the artists are absolutely ignorant, even of spelling . . . *I am an old man*, an anomaly, and they hate me because I am less ignorant than the rest of men. Excepting d'Aurevilly, Flaubert, Sainte-Beuve, I cannot find one man who shares my ideas. Gautier alone is able to understand me when I talk painting. *I have a horror of life*, I repeat."

Autumn he always found depressing because his neuralgia returned with the first cold and with it doubtless his use of drugs. In 1862 he stayed on at Paris and did not write his mother from September

until December. Then when she reproached him with enjoying himself and not thinking of her, he wrote: "None of my infirmities has quit me, neither my rheumatism nor my nightmares, nor my nervous fits, nor that intolerable faculty of hearing every noise strike me in the pit of the stomach, nor my fears — my fear of sudden death especially, my fear of living too long, my fear of seeing you die, my fear when I fall asleep and my horror when I awaken — nor my lingering lethargy, which makes me put off for months the most urgent things." Thus he excuses himself: this drug-caused lethargy is proven by the correspondence which suddenly dwindles; even to his mother he wrote but five letters in 1863, and only eight to other persons.

His lethargy made him put off one most urgent matter: to pay a note he had signed, very likely to get money for Poulet-Malassis. So he was forced, at a day's notice, to sell to the Jew Lévy for only two thousand francs (four hundred dollars) the rights to all his volumes of translations from Poe, which were bringing him in from four hundred to six hundred francs a year. Even this sacrifice made but a drop in the bucket of his debts. By August he was planning to follow his friend Malassis to Belgium, to escape his creditors and the paralyzing air of the capital. "I have got a horror of Paris", he writes his mother: "if it were not because of you I should never want to return to France." The utter apathy of all his faculties is seen in a letter written at the end of November, 1863:

"The days are so short; I am in such pain after luncheon, after dinner I feel so bored in my unlighted room, I suffer so much from lack of friends and luxury, I am so crushed by my loneliness and idleness, that I put off constantly until the morrow the accomplishment of my duties, even of those whose fulfillment lies closest to my heart."

There were of course days of truce that kept him alive — days when he mustered up courage to leave the prison cell of his lodgings where he had written that year "L'examen de minuit" and "L'imprévu", and escape into the streets, where every bridge recalled the memory of when he first saw it at his mother's side:

> Be still, my Sorrow; let thy tossing cease.
> Didst pray for Night: 'tis falling now: for see!
> Bearing to some her care, to some her peace,
> Night's arras drapes the town with mystery.
>
> While all the herd in vulgar revelries
> 'Neath Pleasure's lash, that falls implacably,
> Is gone to cull remorse from lecheries,
> My Sorrow, give thy hand and come with me
>
> To ways apart. Lo, all our days gone by,
> In ancient robes, lean from the balconied sky:
> From every wave arise our Joys deceased:
>
> The dying sun sleeps 'neath the bridge's arch:
> And, trailing shrouds of darkness from the East,
> Hark, dear, Night softly starts her shadowy march.

But when Night came in all her blackness and he sank back into his inner gloom, he would seek like

a ragged-winged moth the music halls that blazed along the outer boulevards, to give himself for an hour the illusion of living. Here he was often seen prowling among the dancers — gloomy and sinister as a priest of the Black Mass, frightening the little grisettes by his corpselike mask with its tragic fiery eyes. When asked by a friend what he was doing there he replied: "I am watching the death's-heads passing by."

"The only emotion by which I am conscious I am still living", he wrote his mother, "is a *vague* desire of celebrity, of vengeance and of fortune." So in April, 1864, he left for Brussels, meditating a book which would wreak revenge upon a nation which had denied him the recognition he sought as his life's goal and justification.

XII · SWAN SONG

Fifteen months before he left Paris, he had foretold the collapse of his life's hopes in "Les plaintes d'un Icare" — he was a new Icarus who had failed because he had tried to grasp the infinite:

> . . . Vainly I sought with feeble wing
> To plumb the limits of the sky;
> Beneath a vast refulgent eye
> I feel my pinions weakening;
>
> Beauty! I perish, slain by her,
> Nor shall I know what glory is
> And give my name to the abyss
> That soon shall be my sepulchre.

Art for Art's sake had consoled him twenty years before, but what had been the result of his long efforts? "Even for what I have accomplished, so little justice has been done me!" He needed a public, which alone can cheer the artist in his prison workshop, which alone can justify him in his selfish withdrawal from society — make him feel a man among men and keep him at work after his whole being cries out from disgust with self. Baudelaire was paying the price Life exacts from those whose nerves send them early to the ivory tower. He was now a prisoner in that tower, isolated and unloved.

We die by inches, spiritually no less than physically. When Baudelaire left Paris in 1864 his youthful response to life and beauty was completely blighted. Death's hand was already upon him; he was to create no more.

Did he feel this paralysis and seek at forty-three a new background to stimulate his flagging muse? He could easily see that his inspiration was failing. In 1861 he had published only six new poems; the three preceding years had yielded twice as many. In 1862 he published not six but four; in 1863 two, and in 1864 two. In the two years spent in Belgium he published but one new poem really worthy of his genius, which then turned to writing scurrilous satirical verse.

When he was younger and stronger, verses had come to him even in his apathy. We have seen how he once turned that very apathy into poems like the four entitled "Spleen." He could muse on a theme in his lonely walks, or jot down a quatrain that came to him while he was staring into a glass of wine at a café table. But now his habitual melancholia and inertia made it next to impossible to finish anything. The magnificent epilogue he had planned for "Les Fleurs du mal", an apostrophe to Paris — "Tu m'as donné ta boue et j'en ai fait de l'or" — lay in his portfolio, a mass of unmatched and fragmentary lines. Too apathetic to toil over difficult phrases or rhymes, he used his rare moments of vital inspiration to compose prose-poems.

Hence the few verses published between the end

of 1860 and 1864 — verses written too late to be included in the second edition of his poems — are really his swan song. We must consider carefully this valedictory to life.

The first note that we remark in them is his furious aspiration toward the departing joys of love. Life had been to him solely the double service of Art and Love: in them lay his hope of salvation, as he had declared in "La rançon." Now he invokes love's vanishing ecstasies in "La prière d'un païen":

> Ah, no! let not thy flame expire;
> Quicken my heart's numb apathy,
> Joyance, our souls' consuming fire!
> O Goddess, hear a suppliant's cry! . . .

Approaching impotence makes love a perverse and complicated emotion. There is cruelty in the lovely poem "Madrigal triste", there is hateful egotism in it, but there is also an aspiration no longer satisfied by physical beauty alone, but craving from the beloved an equality in suffering:

> What care I, love, that thou be wise?
> Be fair, be sad! For tears contain
> An added charm in lovely eyes,
> Like vales a river glorifies;
> The rose is fresher in the rain.
>
> I love thee best when joy has fled
> Thy cowering brow and eyes aghast;
> When all thy heart is drowned in dread;
> When life for thee is overspread
> By dreadful storm-clouds from the past.

I love thee when thy heart's distress
Pours blood-warm from thy streaming eye;
When, notwithstanding my caress,
Thine anguish in its heaviness
Bursts from thee like a dying cry. . . .

. . . And yet, my dear, till fate contrives
That all thy dreams resemble Hell,
And, in an endless nightmare's gyves,
Musing of poisons and of knives,
Craving for smoke and bursting shell,

Fearful when opening to a knock,
Full of a boundless vast distrust
And quivering at the striking clock,
Thou liest crushed beneath the rock
Of Irresistible Disgust,

Thou canst not, O my queen and slave,
That lovest me with shuddering,
Here in the Night's unwholesome grave,
Cry, from thy heart — that shrieking cave:
"I am thine equal, O my King!"

Baudelaire's present hell, a hell of creditors and notes due before the clock announced the closing of the bank, and his terror of bailiffs and process-servers knocking at his door, have given him the sadistic pride of Maturin's Melmoth. But they have made him ask more from love than mere physical contact.

Love of the baser sort has its price. Noting this price, a conscience sharpened by the lesson of "Tannhäuser" cries out. In the same year that the poet heard the Wagner Overture he published the poem

"L'avertisseur", which symbolizes conscience as the warning serpent in the heart of every man:

> Plunge in the fixed and frozen lies
> Of Satyr-maids' or Nixies' eyes,
> The Fang cries: "Duty, not Delight!"
>
> Beget thee sons, or plant a tree,
> Carve marble, chisel poetry,
> The Fang cries: "If thou die to-night!"

If thou die to-night! After his first attack, he well knew that he might die in his sleep, in his sleep peopled with nightmares. And not only was sleep a tissue of horrors, but those horrors were often prolonged beyond the limits of the dawn. His brain was haunted by the sense of an abyss yawning before him, a delusion which in "Le gouffre" he compares with Pascal's. Was it opium or his neurasthenia that made him react thus to the spectacle of the sea and the sky?

In any case "Le gouffre" crystallizes long days of brooding before the blue horizon at Honfleur. They were days that revealed his weakness, for as he declares in the prose-poem "Le Confiteor de l'artiste", that ocean in which he loved to forget his ego soon became a torture to his nerves. "Must one eternally suffer, or eternally flee from the beautiful? . . . The study of beauty is a duel in which the artist cries out with terror before he is conquered."

Baudelaire is now the victim of his nerves: "Le Confiteor de l'artiste" is truly a confession of his

hysteria. That hysteria inspires "Le mauvais vitrier", another prose-poem of 1862. The poet calls to his attic a peddler of glassware, and then, because he offers no rose-colored glasses to glorify life, throws a flowerpot upon the basket of glass. This mania for destruction or rather this impulsiveness so characteristic of the neurasthenic, Baudelaire can only explain as an intervention of the Devil.

Our smiles at this explanation congeal at once when we read one of the poet's letters to Flaubert. Two years before Baudelaire wrote the novelist that he believed in an active Force of Evil, external to man. In the awful months that followed, the poet learned to look upon this force as an actual demon, consciously intervening in man's affairs. The poem "L'examen de minuit", of 1863, shows that the Devil became real to him through a gnawing conscience, aware of its base compromises. *Baudelaire believed in the Devil*, just as he had believed from boyhood in the Guardian Angel whose call he was still resisting.

It was this belief in the Devil that gave him that vertiginous panorama of the world's corruption entitled "L'imprévu", whose tortured diabolism melts so poignantly into the Christian aspiration of the conclusion:

> . . . A journalist, who thinks his reek a flame,
> Says to the wretches he has drowned in gloom:
> "Show me the God of Beauty ye acclaim,
> The justice ye assume!"

And best of all I know a certain rake
— Weak fool! — who yawns and snivels night and day,
And whines: "I will be righteous and forsake
My sins, but not to-day!"

Mutters the Dial in turn: "I call and call
In vain on that decaying flesh. He's lost!
Blind, deaf and brittle, Man is like a wall
By insects gnawed, and frost!"

Then One appears whom all denied at first,
Who cries with sneer exultant as they pass:
"Have ye enough of my dark cup accurst
Drunk, in the sweet Black Mass?

My temple in your hearts ye daily rear;
Ye have in secret kissed my loins unclean!
Know me, the Fiend, by my victorious jeer,
Vast as this world obscene!

Detected hypocrites, how could ye hope
To mock your master and to stack the cards;
— Gain wealth and Heaven, by a horoscope
That promised two rewards?

The game must recompense the hunter old
Who, frozen, lay in wait for many an hour.
Now I shall bear you through the dark and cold
— To share my pleasures dour —

Down through the dark thick massy earth and rock,
The huddled ashes of your sires gray,
Down to a palace carved of one great block
That shall not waste away,

For it is built of Sin, the primal curse,
And hold my sorrow and my pride and fame!"
— Meanwhile, perched high above the universe,
An angel shall proclaim

The victory of Thy chastened ones, who say:
"Blessèd Thy lash, O Lord, that made us mend!
Thou didst not juggle with this thing of clay,
O Wisdom without end!"

Those clarion notes so sweetly, softly fall
Through solemn eves when God is vintaging,
They pierce with holy joy the hearts of all
Who hear the praise they sing.

"L'imprévu" is the poet's epilogue to "Les Fleurs du mal", and he is the rake mentioned in the second stanza. This poem is the cross set at the end of that diabolistic Pilgrim's Progress through the Garden of Sin, and those who deny its Christian inspiration will find it hard to explain.

All the poems of revolt which precede it are but its prelude; they relate the battle in which Baudelaire spent his strength. He spent his strength in revolt, in fighting his heredity, his early Christian environment, an education under a hostile stepfather, the money-grubbing utilitarian world in which he found himself at twenty and the taut nerves to which he owed genius. His verse reflects these tensions within and without. As none of his desires had found fulfillment he was naturally a poet of revolt. It was well for him that he could believe in the Devil.

These warring tensions in the poet and the weariness that came from them finally imposed upon him the art form which in 1861 became his favorite medium. Prose-poems demanded less effort from his tired, wine-soaked brain, filled with the black conviction that his polished verses had fallen like pearls before swine.

He had written the first two in 1855. Fernand Desnoyers had asked him for some verses on nature, to use in a volume by various pens, entitled "Fontainebleau." Baudelaire replied that he thought the new religion of Nature "shocking"; he could not believe that "the soul of the gods dwelt in plants", or that his own soul was like that of "a sanctified vegetable." He did not care for nature, he added: "in the depths of the woods, under those arches which are like our sacristies and cathedrals, I think of our marvellous cities, and the prodigious music which rolls over their summits seems to me to translate the lamentations of man." So he sent Desnoyers two prose-poems on twilight and the joys of solitude.

He had tried to imitate the prose-poems of Aloysius Bertrand in the volume called "Gaspard de la nuit", whose picturesque little cameos from the past had inspired an essay of Sainte-Beuve's in 1844. From Bertrand Baudelaire had got the title "Poèmes nocturnes", and he had sought to attain an equal objectivity in word-etchings picturing the life of his own day. When he found that he could not catch that objective sharpness of definition, he was humiliated in his pride as a conscious artist, because "the

greatest honor of a poet is to accomplish exactly what he has planned to do."

So at least he wrote to Arsène Houssaye, editor of *La Presse*, which in 1862 accepted twenty-four of these sketches. Baudelaire had gone on with his plan, publishing the year before seven poems, which, as they were included in the group sent to Houssaye, caused trouble and made it necessary thereafter to resort to less important editors. Fourteen more poems appeared before Baudelaire left for Belgium, and four at the end of 1864. In 1865 appeared one prose-poem; three others were published posthumously.

These little masterpieces which the poet intended to call "Le spleen de Paris", therefore represent the last work he did before his exile, and they are the last work that he left completed. For although he intended to round them out from sixty-four to a full hundred, each part is complete in itself. They are like the joints of a serpent which might be lengthened indefinitely, as Baudelaire wrote to Houssaye in his Dedication, and from this we must quote because it reveals the artist's motive:

"Who of us has not, on his days of ambition, dreamed of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and without rhyme, supple enough and abrupt enough to adapt itself to the lyrical impulses of the soul, to the undulations of reverie, to the starts of the conscience?

"It is especially from the frequentation of enormous cities with all their infinite interwoven relations that this obsessing ideal is born. Have you not

yourself, dear friend, tried to translate into a song the strident cry of the peddler of glassware, and express in lyric prose all the heart-rending suggestions that this cry sends up to garret rooms, through the loftiest fogs that fill the streets?"

So Baudelaire gives to his prose-poems not only color and outline, but atmosphere. Marvellous in their evocatory power, their melodies alone awaken moods, and affect the reader no less than their words or their images. The "Poèmes en prose" are truly — even more than "Les Fleurs du mal" — the final expression of the poet's sorcery, of the evocatory magic in which he stands supreme in French poetry.

And they are the final expression of his vision of the world, of his melancholia, his idealism, his desperate desire to flee from the prison of his subjectivity, his furious longing to find some escape from the ugliness of modern life. They are the center of his work: absolutely devoid of pose they explain all the rest of it. He puts into them his early memories — his childish love of the theater, his boyish sensuality aroused by a *bonne*, his youthful desire to live as a vagabond in exotic lands, "always walking straight ahead, without knowing whither, without any one worrying over it, and always to see new countries."

Unconsciously, he puts into them his youthful love of Musset, whom he now hates; for as he says in his letters, "all the elegiac poets are scum." But the hero of "Une mort héroïque" might have been taken from the elder poet's comedies. His admiration for Poe inspires the fantasy "Laquelle est la vraie",

wherein the lover finds at the grave of his mistress a demon claiming to be the real Benedicta, and as he stamps furiously in the earth, finds himself fettered forever to the grave of his ideal. He puts into them his idealism ("Les nuages"): "What do you love, mysterious stranger? . . . I love the clouds that pass down yonder, the wonderful clouds."

Beauty is still his lure, as it was when he first read "Mademoiselle de Maupin." "Le désir de peindre" shows his longing to reproduce the features of one he has not seen for a long time — a woman like a black sun, in whom we may divine the enigmatic J. G. F., or at any rate the subject of his finest pen sketch, because he confesses that he would like to die, slowly, under the gaze of her great cavernous mysterious eyes. For another Egeria, probably "La femme aux yeux verts" celebrated in "Ciel brouillé", he wrote "Les bienfaits de la lune", in which the moon promises a woman longings like his own:

"Thou shalt feel eternally the influence of my kiss. Thou shalt be beautiful after my fashion. Thou shalt love what I love and what loves me: the water, the clouds, the silence of the night and the immense green sea: the water, shapeless yet multiform, the place where thou shalt not be: the love thou shalt not possess, monstrous flowers: the perfumes that make one delirious, the cats that drowse on pianofortes and moan like women, with soft and throaty voices."

Such are the figures which inspire him now, women whose beauty has the poignant magic of ruins, full-blown women, tender as autumn suns or

Indian Summer days. They possess one and all the maternal qualities which he had invoked in so many loves, and always failed to find. But alas! he is now no longer able to attract love, like the old woman who frightened the children whom she would have liked to caress ("Le désespoir de la vieille"). Condemned henceforth to eternal solitude, he finds a compensation in recounting his disgust for women ("La femme sauvage et la petite maîtresse"), with their imaginary ills and their never-to-be-satisfied desires, which make them affect unhappiness in the midst of luxury, while real unhappiness in others leaves them cold. He would gladly treat them as the wild woman at the fair is treated by her exhibitor. But, as we see in "Le galant tireur", he refrains like the marksman who shatters the clay doll by imagining it is his wife, and then thanks her for his skill. No less than the marksman, he knows that he owes to woman, and to the sorrows caused by woman, "a great part of his genius." Baudelaire never spoke more truly.

Yet there are women for whom he feels nothing but sympathy, those whom suffering has ripened, the old women whom Life has tortured like himself. He had sung their sorrows in one of the finest poems added to the second edition of "Les Fleurs du mal", — "Les petites vieilles":

> . . . Once they were women in their loveliness,
> — These monsters, and though writhen, bent and old,
> They need our love! For they are souls, no less!
> Beneath their cotton skirts and tatters cold,

Lashed by the cruel winds, these things of eld,
By thundering omnibuses terrified,
Creep slowly, each with broidered satchel held
As 'twere a precious relic to her side; . . .

Before Victor Hugo wrote "Les Misérables", Charles Baudelaire saw the poetry of humble lives, in a vision which shows how his heart, deprived of the love he dreamed of, went out to others:

. . . But tenderly I watch you from afar
And mark your faltering steps with anxious gaze,
As might a father — children that ye are! —
Unknown, I follow all your secret ways. . . .

My family! O sisters! Withered leaves!
Each night I bid you all a grave farewell!
Where will ye be at dawn, O agèd Eves,
On whom is laid God's claw implacable?

His own suffering gave the egotist sympathy with suffering, in these verses, written two years before at Honfleur, with his mother in the background of his mood; and this tenderness is the dominant note in the little cameos of "Le spleen de Paris." Echoes of these verses recur in the prose-poem "Les veuves." Again in "Les fenêtres" he portrays an old woman sitting all day long in a window opposite his, whose life and thoughts he tries to imagine. His story of her may not be true, but "what matters the reality outside myself, if it has helped me to live, to feel that I am, and what I am?"

He must escape from self, if only to enrich his selfhood. Like all the later Romanticists he turns from his debauch of introspection to reality: the poems added to "Les Fleurs du mal" in 1860 were for the most part the objective "Tableaux parisiens." Longing to escape from self makes him write at the same time in his "Paradis artificiels": "The Bedouin of civilization learns in the Sahara of great cities many motives for feeling, unknown to the man whose sensibility is limited by the home and the family. In great capitals, as in the desert, there is something which fortifies and molds the heart of man, which fortifies it in a different way — when it does not deprave and weaken it to abjectness and even to suicide."

He had felt that fortifying influence in the long rambles which, like Poe's hero William Wilson, he had enjoyed in the swarming ant hill of Paris. He realized, and admits in "Les foules", that "what man calls love is indeed petty, indeed limited and slight, compared to that ineffable orgy, that holy prostitution of the soul which gives itself up entirely, in its poetry and divine love, to the unexpected phenomenon, to the stranger who passes by."

He gains from this "prostitution of the soul" a happiness superior to vulgar pleasures, vaster and more sophisticated. He feels that his joys are analogous to those of missionaries or founders of colonies: like them he can "smile at those who pity him for the agitation of his destiny and the chasteness of his existence."

He is not to be pitied, although his pictures are full of pity. In his own poverty he can sympathize with the poor, and feel "the silent eloquence of their supplicating eyes." A lover of fairs and their people since his summer at Neuilly, he sketches the old mountebank abandoned by the crowd — finds in him a symbol of the old man of letters who has outlived his generation, the old poet without friends or family, degraded by his poverty and the ingratitude of the public. He can portray the beggar who needs a beating to restore his pride — the sole mainspring of life after life has lost its savor. A believer in the Devil, he can find interest in ghastly superstitions ("La corde"), or in the innocent victim of erotic perversity whom he calls Mademoiselle Lancet. "O Lord my God, who hast perhaps put into my mind a taste for horror in order to convert my soul, have pity on all madmen!" This prayer is no rhetorical phrase; it is essentially personal.

Only the poet can thus enter into the soul of another. "He alone can take a bath of multitude who has from childhood had a hatred for his domicile and a taste for travel." Baudelaire hates his lodgings because they recall his days of lethargy, days of reaction from debauch, spent before a calendar marked with sinister dates, or facing a letter that he had long feared to open ("La chambre double"). Unable because of poverty to escape in reality, he has learned how to flee this purgatory in opium dreams. But he would prefer to escape in space: for him, no voyage would be too long ("Déjà"), because

at its end he would have to leave the ocean whose moods reflect all the moods of humanity. He dreams of travel as he breathes the fragrance of his paramour's hair ("La chevelure"), and "finds again the languors of long hours spent on a divan in a ship's cabin, hours lulled by the imperceptible roll of the harbor." Like the poem of the same name this page is a memory of the island of Bourbon.

Indeed his once hateful voyage to the East comes back to him suffused with vivid color. "La belle Dorothée" is an evocation of a woman of the Isles, an exotic sylphide clad in bright silks and decked with jewels, recalling his first idealization of Jeanne. For this nymph of his imagination we see him planning a dream voyage to a land like China, "a land where life is sweet to breathe, and where happiness is wedded to silence." To create such lands, "every man bears within himself his own dose of nature's opium, incessantly secreted and renewed." But he demands bitterly: "Shall we ever live in, shall we ever pass into that picture which my mind has painted?"

For reality allows no voyage; all he can enjoy is the spectacle of Le Havre. So in "Le port" he tells of "the mysterious and aristocratic pleasure" felt by one "who has no longer any curiosity or ambition", in viewing all the activities of a seaport — the activities of those "who still have the strength to will."

In "Les projets" he becomes even more philosophical. Here we find the poet seeking an ideal back-

ground for his love. First he covets a lonely park surrounding a palace, then a cottage by a tropical sea, then a snug chamber in an inn, with a blazing fire. Returning from the walk in which he has relished these fancies, he tells himself: "to-day I have possessed, in dreams, three dwelling places in which I found an equal pleasure. Why compel my body to move, since my soul travels so easily? And what is the use of carrying out one's plans, since the plan is in itself a sufficient enjoyment?"

So too he exorcises the phantoms of love and wealth and glory. In "Les tentations" he is visited by all three, and refuses them all. He has no use for women, who are no better than himself and hence can not help him escape from himself; he has no use for Plutus, who can only enrich him by impoverishing others; no use for Glory, because he will not take to wife the mistress of men he would prefer not to mention.

What he desires is a different sort of contentment. "A une heure du matin" describes his pangs of conscience for a day wasted with stupid editors, ignorant ballerinas, directors of theaters: it avows his remorse for the occasions when his perverse demon has made him brag of shameful things. When the poet is at last in his room, with his door locked against the tyranny of the human face, he makes this prayer before relaxing in his bath of darkness: "O Lord my God! vouchsafe me the grace to produce a few fine verses which shall prove to me that I am not the worst of men, and that I am not inferior to those I despise."

Only Art can save him. But Art is a chimera, a devouring illusion. In "Chacun sa chimère" he beholds the race of men, each bearing upon his shoulders a Chimera, whose claws are sunk deep into his breast — each with his companion and burden, as he walks in the vast procession toward the horizon of death, filled with "the resignation of those who are compelled to hope forever." And as he contemplates the mystery of his vision — the mystery of his vocation — again his irresistible indifference falls upon him, and he is "crushed more heavily than they under the weight of their chimeras."

Once more we meet the specter of his Boredom — the monster celebrated in the first poem of "Les Fleurs du mal." To escape this boredom, Baudelaire has found but one remedy, and he gives it in a page which might be the epigraph of the prose-poems:

"You must always be drunken. Nothing else matters: that is the only question. If you would not feel the horrible burden of Time crushing your shoulders and bending you toward the earth, you must be ceaselessly drunken.

"But with what? With wine, with poetry or with virtue, as you please. But be drunken.

"And if sometimes, on the steps of a palace, on the green grass of a ditch, in the dreary solitude of your room, you awaken, with your drunkenness already diminished or gone, ask of the wind, the wave, the star, the bird, the clock . . . ask what time it is; and the wind, the wave, the star, the bird, the clock will answer: 'It is time to be drunken! If you

would not be the martyred slaves of Time, be drunken; be ceaselessly drunken! With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you please.' "

Such is the burden of "Le spleen de Paris." A vision of life absolutely personal, yet so clear that it destroys life's necessary illusions, leaves him sunk at forty-two in a lethargy that craves only emotion. The poet who had lived for his moods and who had dug deeper than any other into the inferno of the human heart lay chained like Judas in the depths of Hell, unable to find at will the intoxication of poetry. Wine indeed is left to him, and his special virtue, dandyism. Only the dandy survives this paralysis of the artist, as in the decrepitude of many a brilliant talent we find only a shell of manners.

In Baudelaire both the manners and the ideal subsisted, despite clothes often threadbare and linen mended though spotless. To his mother he wrote that he still gave two hours a day to the minute cares of his toilet. We have a portrait sketched by one of his first disciples, a few months before the poet left Paris for Belgium. "There was in him something of a monk, a soldier and a man of the world", says Léon Cladel, who mentions the gloomy macabre pleasantries, by which Baudelaire loved to attract the attention and the hatred of the bourgeois. He found the master that afternoon working in a vast white linen blouse, with a black and purple cravat tied loosely around his neck, — freshly shaven and with fingernails "pointed like an infanta's." It was to criticize and correct the proofs of Cladel's

first volume of verse that Baudelaire had donned this costume.

The poet at once started to descant upon the high importance of choosing exactly the right word. With exaggerated zeal, he ransacked dictionaries of all the languages, all the grammars that he possessed, to end, once, by a frantic search through a Hebrew lexicon, dragged down from his topmost shelf before his dazzled pupil! And all of Baudelaire's serious and valuable comments on the colors and forms of words, on their moral overtones and values, which make the poet the creative equal of Pan or God himself, do not efface in our minds the impression of that gesture — at which the poet was himself the first to laugh.

A dandy to the end, Baudelaire had seriously justified his ideal in two articles published the same year (1863). His obituary notice of Eugène Delacroix magnified that aspect of the artist, using as a text Emerson's dictum: "The hero is he who is immovably centered." He compared Delacroix to Mérimée in the fine reserve by which he protected his sensibility and his passion for the beautiful; like Baudelaire, Delacroix had not disdained dress: he too had loved the sobriety of English clothes in an age of Romantic fashions. In Delacroix, Baudelaire also finds the dandy's passion for domination — a "molochistic" force revealed even by his sinister color schemes. The dead artist had always repudiated this "sinister" quality: no matter — the criticism reveals the critic.

Indeed he here reaffirms his attitude of 1845. In 1863, moreover, he puts a whole philosophy of dandyism into "Le peintre de la vie moderne", sixty brilliant pages devoted to the great illustrator Constantin Guys. To Baudelaire Guys was not merely the artist made famous by his vivid sketches for *The Illustrated London News* — the painter of "high life" and battle scenes. The chronicler of life in all its fashions paints the moral and æsthetic history of his times, asserts Baudelaire; man's conception of the beautiful stamps itself in his attire, his gestures and his very features. "Man comes at last to resemble what he would like to be." And thus he finds that Guys reveals the Second Empire — reveals its very spirit no less than its costumes and carriages and military trappings; in his drawings life itself is beheld as a visible art.

Fashion only consecrates that second essential in all beauty, continues the critic, — the relative element, which is no less important than the eternal beauty which accompanies it. It is this relative element which shows man's adaptation of the ideal beauty to his age: beneath it we see the age, and view man in his moral diversity, in his passions. Without this element, which alone gives charm to beauty, we could not assimilate it. As Stendhal had said: "The Beautiful is only the promise of happiness", so he too sees in Beauty a personal and moral quality.

This is the beauty that Guys pursues — and Baudelaire. A man of the world no less than an artist, Guys has the curiosity which for him is so

large a part of genius. He has a sensibility which receives impressions with the fresh vibrancy of a convalescent, or rather of a child. The child is always drunk with his impressions, remarks Baudelaire; and to him genius is only childhood recoverable at will. Genius is vibrancy: we remember his confession that he wrote "Une mort héroïque" with tears in his eyes.

He is one with Guys in his sensibility. Guys shares with him his love of crowds. The artist too knows the boundless joys of losing himself in a bath of multitude, "a bath of number, in the flowing wave, in movement, in the fugitive and in the infinite. . . . To be outside one's home, yet to feel everywhere at home, to see the world, to be at the center of the world and to remain hidden from the world" — he knows that pleasure of the spectator, "a prince who enjoys everywhere his incognito. . . . The man in love with the universal life goes into crowds as into an immense reservoir of electric energy." He is a mirror of that crowd, a kaleidoscope reflecting all its impulses. "He is an ego insatiably avid of the non-ego." So too is Baudelaire, now.

And his portrait of Guys the artist, drunk with all the visible splendors of Paris, is another prose-poem. It sets forth his own ideal of life. He still loves luxury, loves that modernity of luxury which is half of beauty, as he again takes pains to show, since even material fashions express the spiritual from which they came. His tribute to the art of

Guys, so rapid and sure in his sketches, which "explode luminously in space" with the very gestures of life, makes one think of his own poetic realism, which neither hesitates before things brutal nor magnifies them.

Baudelaire's eulogy of the dandy in Guys is a personal apologia. For him the dandy is an idealist in love with distinction, and not so far removed from the stoic. The dandy is a born enemy of vulgarity, of triviality, of cheap democratic ideals: he is the last hero possible in an age infatuated with equality and pure naturalism. And Baudelaire proves that everything purely natural is evil, that even virtue is artificial, that Good is the result of effort and conscious art — a theological argument, which he extends paradoxically to justify woman's use of cosmetics as a needed embellishment to nature! Then comes a chapter on the women of Guys' drawings, beautiful but corrupt, figures of evil, macabre or Satanic incarnations of Parisian vice. These portraits are "morally fruitful." The dandy in the poet links arms with the cenobite, who saw in woman the instrument of the Fall.

"Le peintre de la vie moderne" is thus also a portrait of Baudelaire. It shows us all the ideals of the poet's youth surviving in the man of middle age who was quitting for Belgium this background of a luxury he enjoyed mainly with his eyes. And one can easily picture the aging dandy, a little rusty in dress but still immaculate, climbing into the railway carriage which was to bear him into exile. He had celebrated Paris no less than Guys, but unlike the

wealthy and famous artist, he had got nothing for his efforts save the sterile ecstasies of creation or appreciation — those moments when he had lived "enchanted, struck by the lightning-bolt of some work of art."

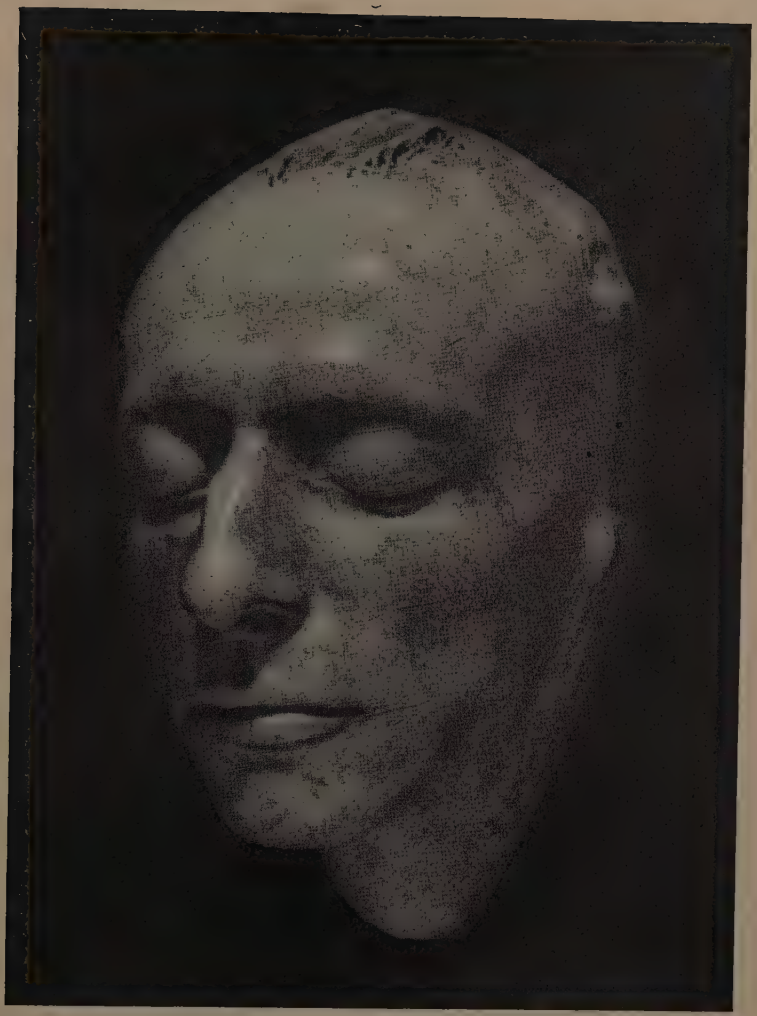
XIII · FLESH TO SPIRIT

We die by inches, and dying blinds us to everything but the task of living. Henceforward Baudelaire almost ceased to hope for things impossible, and quite forgot his thoughts of suicide. The battle with death sucked up the energy that had struggled to bring the infinite into the finite. He reared no more altars to new Muses draped with his dreams, but put into pitiless verse his opinions of Belgian prostitutes; he conceived for a moment an old man's desire for a daughter, but his weary heart fixed itself more and more upon his mother who in spite of her inability to understand his spirit was all of his past and the first and only real love of his life. He longed for comfort and material security even more than for glory, convinced as he was that his work would survive; he could still eat, after his illnesses, "with the *gourmandise* of a child"; he took on weight in Belgium. In his lonely hotel room his childhood will soon come back with all its memories, and in the churches he had to inspect his spirit writhing within a weakened body will begin to grope its way back to the faith of his early years. At the end his dying flesh was to help him to quiet if not to end his inner conflict, and start to carve that white statue of tranquility which, as Theodore Parker said, every man of genius has to hew out from the hard marble of life.

He was "already ill" before he left Paris, for the letters indicate that he had another shock, or at least attacks of vertigo and vomiting, during a last visit to Versailles in February, 1864. There were other disquieting symptoms. "A man walking behind me in the street, a passing child or dog, make me feel like fainting", he wrote. The physician told him that he must force himself to walk. The poet called his infirmity "ridiculous", and thought that warm weather and cold showers would cure it. But cold showers were hard to obtain and costly. So he fought alone with his rising blood pressure, though in the art galleries, and whenever he was obliged "to force his attention", he had to flee into the open air.

Under such conditions visits to art galleries prove that he is still a connoisseur, at all costs. *Ridentem ferient ruinæ* — the falling house shall not crush my laughter — he writes across the photograph he sat for in Belgium, which shows him in worn but conventional black, with eyes less tragic than in the Carjat portrait, and with his long hair, already gray at forty-three, brushed back like a clergyman's. The closely clipped locks and defiantly bared throat find no place in this dignified portrait, and the old ironic smile is not so bitter. *Ridentem ferient ruinæ.*

He came to Brussels to lecture before the Cercle artistique et littéraire — a project very probably suggested by the Belgian painter Stevens or his brother. Afterward he hoped to speak in the principal cities and fill his purse. The first lecture was on Delacroix,



THE DEATH-MASK

the second on Théophile Gautier; and from one of the audience on this occasion we have a pen-portrait of the poet which fixes his figure imperishably in the memory.

"An usher opened the lofty door", writes Camille Lemonnier. "I heard a thin and penetrating voice of a high register, a voice that rose and fell like a preacher's, accenting with emphasis each syllable of this tribute to another king of poets: 'Gautier, the master and my master'" —

. . . "Baudelaire spoke that evening to an audience of about twenty. He spoke to them as he would have spoken to a court of princes. . . . A small table occupied the middle of the platform: he stood behind it, with his white cravat, in the luminous circle of a lamp. The light shone upon his slender moving hands . . . hands almost as graceful as a woman's, as they turned the loose leaves carelessly, as if to suggest the illusion of an extemporaneous speech. Those patrician hands, accustomed to using the lightest of instruments, would now trace in the air slow evocatory curves, or accompany the ever-musical endings of the sentences with hovering movements grave as mystic rites.

"In fact, Baudelaire suggested the image of a Churchman, with the beautiful gestures of the pulpit. . . . He developed his thoughts with an almost evangelical unction, . . . he had the grave beauty of a cardinal of letters officiating before the Ideal. The half-light from the lampshade modelled in shadows his pale clean-shaven face; I could see his

eyes turning like black suns; his mouth had a vitality of its own in the life and expression of his face; his thin mobile lips quivered sensitively beneath the violin-bow of his words. And his head dominated like a lofty tower the frightened attention of his hearers."

The lectures were a failure and were discontinued after the third, on "Les paradis artificiels", the twenty-third of May. Instead of the one thousand francs which he had first expected — a figure afterwards reduced to five hundred, Baudelaire was paid one hundred francs — twenty dollars. He had failed because he was unknown in Belgium; a year later Alexandre Dumas *père* spoke to a crowded hall. But he wrote his mother that he had had "an unprecedented success", because a critic in the *Indépendance belge* had written a favorable article, and he was not discouraged by the collapse of his lecture tour.

That project had after all merely justified the cost of the journey. His real purpose in going to Belgium had been to sell his books to Lacroix the publisher. He needed money for his landlord at Paris and for other creditors, including the usurer Arondel, now writing him such letters that he dared not open them for days. But all his efforts to meet this Belgian publisher failed, and his half-dozen letters and interviews with the man's partner only obtained a refusal. Baudelaire concluded that they had been warned against him — perhaps by one of Hugo's followers. "So I have enemies; what an honor!" — he wrote his mother. His worries had been increased by a

threatened lawsuit, and by the fear that Jeanne was becoming blind; Ancelle must not forget to send her fifty francs, at Batignolles.

He too had been ill for months — palpitations of the heart, colic and chronic diarrhea: he could not sleep, and his insomnia was visited by horrific visions. He was so ill that a letter of fifty lines left his brain exhausted. He would not return without money, so in June he decided to write a book on Belgium, which might be published piecemeal in the *Figaro*.

Already he was making notes for this book, "La Belgique déshabillée", which was intended to be a ferocious exposure of Belgian life and ideals. He had found nothing to please him in Belgium, except the art galleries and the architecture, especially the ornate rococo churches built by the Jesuits. Malines, which still exhaled for him "a perfume of Spain", was its one charming city; he would have loved to end his days there, in that town of chimes and nuns, with tufts of grass growing in the streets. "I found a wonderful Jesuit church which no one visits. I was in short so delighted that I succeeded in forgetting the present, and I bought some old Delft pottery." But only for a moment did he forget that Malines was after all spoiled by its inhabitants. "The whole nation is brutified; only the past is interesting."

Everything disgusted him: the food made him ill; the bread was bad, the beer bad; the trees were black with soot, the flowers had no perfume. He had

hoped to leave in September with Nadar the aeronaut, and fly by balloon to Austria or Turkey, but he owed money to his landlady, as usual, and felt he could not leave. Then came winter, a winter uncheered by open fires, since the thrifty Belgians used only stoves.

A rich banker invited him to lecture in his drawing-rooms. Baudelaire began his talk, but seeing at the end of ten minutes that every one was bored, sat down, laughing. People had tried to meet him because of his poems, thinking he must be a monster. "When they saw that I was cold, self-controlled and polite, they decided, I suppose, that I was not the author of my book!" This was as bad as being treated as a police spy from Paris, which he also endured.

"What an inept and stupid nation!" Baudelaire exclaims in his letters; "I see no one now, and I let my contempt for every one be seen." He is forced to lead "the life of a plant" until he finishes his book. But, the fact that he is visiting churches is not enough to explain, in the letters to his mother, a religious tone which was not there five years before. "I think of the horrible future and I am resolved to put God and luck on my side."

He spent the autumn of 1864 in better health, correcting the proofs of his fourth volume of Poe, the "Histoires grotesques et sérieuses." Again in October he planned to return. "I need to get back to Honfleur. I need my mother, my room, my collections." There were no reproaches in his mother's

appealing letters: he was sure that this meant she was failing in health and wished to spare him bitter memories of her last days. Desperately, he decided to leave the first of November, then the twentieth. This time he lost his courage at the railway station, thinking of the creditors awaiting him.

Then, as the New Year approached, his thoughts turned backward in the bitter recapitulation he never flinched from. Another wasted year was added to all his wasted years. He writes his mother that God may not allow him time enough to make her happy, and he promises to try and repay her instead of asking for more money. He promises to work too.

"My mind is filled with funereal thoughts. . . . How difficult it is not to plan a book, but to write it without getting tired — in short, to be courageous every day. I have calculated that all I have in my head would have cost me but fifteen months labor if I had worked diligently. . . . If I were at least certain that I had five or six years ahead of me! . . . My fixed thought is now the thought of death . . . because I haven't yet accomplished a third of what I have to do in the world." And he solemnly resolves: "I shall not return to France until I am covered with glory, and have fulfilled certain duties."

His literary duties were: to finish the proof-reading of two volumes of Poe, to complete his notes on Belgium and his prose-poems, "Le spleen de Paris", and to make certain translations from the Latin for Poulet-Malassis — then printing obscene books in

Brussels — with whom he hoped to publish a translation of Petronius' "Satyricon" and a work on Choderlos de Laclos. For this last book he took copious notes; the book itself was never written.

But for lack of money his visits to Belgian cities were never made, and for lack of inspiration his prose-poems were never written. A poet of the mysterious charm of Paris, he could not work away from the capital. He could only tear himself to pieces in lengthening letters.

"I know myself perfectly", he writes to his mother, pointing out the dangers of his sensitiveness and idealism, no less than those of his cowardice, discouragement and vice of procrastination. "When I am overwhelmed with belated work, I find courage for the occasion. . . . I have a violent but not continuous courage. Now, when you already have working against you an intellectual superiority, you must be all the more patient, all the more obstinately assiduous. I possess perfectly the science of life, but I haven't the strength to put it into practice."

He had destroyed himself by his analysis, disintegrated his personality and with it his will power. Only two years before he had confessed to the conceited Champfleury the self-distrust that never left his heart. "I am not happy, because I am always dissatisfied with myself." Now, vainly striving to galvanize the dissected fibers, he notes in his diary as a prayer: "Daily to wish to be the greatest of men."

He had motives to work, motives of anger which had made him work before. His book on Belgium

was to be more than a potboiler: in it he wished "to try out his claws." "I shall use them later against France", he wrote Ancelle. "I shall set forth patiently all the reasons for my disgust for mankind." Already in his journal, among diatribes against his critics, indictments of human ferocity and fatuousness, he had noted, together with his scathing opinion of newspapers — "those tissues of horrors" — his final judgment of modern civilization:

"The world is coming to an end. . . . What has the world henceforth to do beneath the sky? . . . New examples and new victims of inexorable moral laws, we shall perish by that through which we thought to live. The Mechanical will have so Americanized us, 'Progress' will have so atrophied in us all our spiritual side, that nothing, among the sanguinary, sacrilegious or anti-natural dreams of the Utopians can be compared to its actual results. I ask every thinking man to show me what now remains of life. . . .

"The time will come when humanity, like an avenging ogre, will snatch the last shreds of property from those who think themselves the legitimate heirs of revolutions. Still, that will not be the supreme ill. . . .

"The supreme ill will be the debasement of human hearts. . . . Then, the son will flee from his family, not at eighteen years, but at twelve, emancipated by his gluttonous precocity . . . flee to amass wealth, and to compete with his infamous papa, founder and stockholder of a journal which will spread the light.

. . . Your wife, O Bourgeois . . . will be no more than a kept woman. Your daughter . . . will dream in her cradle of selling herself for a million, and you yourself will see nothing amiss: you will regret naught. For there are things in men that strengthen and prosper as others weaken and decline. . . . These times are perhaps quite near; who knows even if they have not come? . . ."

Years before he set down this judgment to record his "anger"; now he strikes out "anger" and writes "sadness." Between the original reading and the correction, he had felt the touch of age; he had come to see that against the new age of materialism and machinery no anger availed. In his diaries too he recorded his autopsy of love, an autopsy which has for us a peculiar interest. In the earlier journal, "Fusées", he had called love the desire of prostituting one's self. This desire might be "a generous emotion", but after maturity, it should be replaced by "the desire of productive concentration." In other words the artist should not love. But now in his Belgian diary, "Mon cœur mis à nu" — a title suggested by Poe's "Marginalia" — his attitude becomes ferociously monastic:

"There are in every man, at every moment, two simultaneous postulations, one toward God, the other toward Satan.

"The invocation to God, or spirituality, is a desire to rise; that of Satan, or bestiality, is a delight in falling to a lower level. It is to this last that should be attributed our loves for women." For women

are "the opposite of the dandy"; they are *natural:* and to Baudelaire all that is natural partakes of the primal iniquity caused by the Fall. Women should not even be allowed in churches. "What conversation can they have with God?" Baudelaire is again the boy who read Lewis' "Monk" with the morbid feelings of an adolescent seminarist.

This idea is not a *boutade*, for it recurs on another page. "Man wants to escape from self, to be *two*. This horror of solitude — this need of forgetting his ego in the outer flesh, is what man nobly calls *his need of loving*. . . . The genius wishes to be *one*, to be *alone*. Glory consists in remaining *one*, and in prostituting oneself in a particular way."

Yet Baudelaire had one passion in Belgium, despite his scurrilous verses against Belgian women and his assertion to Ancelle that his exile had given him nothing but his satirical book and "the habit of an unbroken chastity." This passion is plainly the love of an old man.

One of the poet's sketches is inscribed in his own hand: "To a terrible little girl, this remembrance from a great crazy fool who was looking for a daughter to adopt, and who had not studied either Bertha's character nor the law concerning adoptions." The sketch portrays a full-lipped and sensual girl, and under it is written the poem "Les yeux de Berthe" — three quatrains probably written for his first mistress twenty years before. Like Lamartine and Musset, the poet simply used an unpublished poem a second time.

But we possess another drawing made in Belgium, in which Baudelaire depicts with loving care a handsome mulatress. It is undoubtedly a portrait of Jeanne, the Jeanne of his later twenties. The poet sees and presents her in all the vigor of her maleficent charm, soft-eyed and strange and subtly animal, *les seins portés en offrande*, and full of the sweeping grace of the girl in "Le beau navire." This sinister portrait is made more sinister by the artist's inscription: *Quærens quem devoret*. Seeking whom she may devour: certainly the motto denotes the last mood of the artist, now returning to the ideals of his childhood. It is the vision of a tempted seminarist, and it is dated in Baudelaire's hand February 27, 1865.

So the poet thought of Jeanne as he sat alone in his hotel chamber. He thought of her in all her former beauty, and not as the harpy she had then become. His mother wrote long afterward to Asselineau: "The black Venus tortured him in every possible way. Oh! if you knew! And how much money she got from him! In her letters I never find a word of love, nothing but incessant demands for money. It is always money she must have, and *immediately*." Yet despite her voracity, Baudelaire in his financial calculations always thought of her. He pitied her because of her infirmities, which were partly due to his vices and to the poison seething in his veins. But the sketch reveals more than pity.

He had been ill the month before he made it, with attacks of vertigo which kept him in bed, and which made the reading of a letter the work of an hour.

When he recovered he planned a trip to Paris, then four times postponed it. He went to theaters and concerts that winter, applauded in verse the début of Mademoiselle Amina Boschetti, tested the Belgian spirit of conformity in a music hall by clapping his hands for a wretched dancer who aroused no enthusiasm. The whole hall followed his example!

These dissipations were necessary for his book. For his book he also visited churches. He noted at Sainte-Gudule the stained-glass windows with "their lovely intense colors, like those with which a profound soul invests all the objects of life." Once he had possessed that virtue. But now his notes on architecture contain the admission: "There are lazy men who find in the color of their bed curtains a reason for not working." This apathy was probably due to his disease.

Visiting the churches brought back memories of his first communion, at twelve. After seeing a religious procession he asks himself: "Do you remember the incense, the showers of rose petals?" Again he notes: "The Eternal Crucified One borne over the heads of the crowd. My emotion at the sight." And at Malines, speaking of the nuns and the old women whom a strict observance of every rite has turned into automata, he comments: "Perhaps this is the only true happiness."

Meanwhile his friends at Paris were clamoring for him to return to them. Manet wrote him that this was the only way to get his books published; Sainte-Beuve hinted that his place in the world of letters

was waiting. Madame Paul Meurice implored him: every one missed him at her literary evenings, she missed him at her dinners, missed him at the hour of tea, for of all her friends he alone could talk to her of things besides politics. She would wear for him her most beautiful gown, embroidered in 1816 by her great-grandmother; she asked if she should change her fashion of wearing her white hair. Baudelaire replied that he would like to kiss her if he were certain that she would not misunderstand. She wrote him several delightful letters, in which she lives again, a charming old lady, and we also see that the poet had not lost the secret of pleasing.

The warmth of personal affection felt for Baudelaire by all his intimates need not surprise us. The thorough egotist is most in need of friends; and when he is not dominated he is capable of the greatest devotion. Asselineau says one was never bored with him; he always talked brilliantly and never of himself. A poet can touch no idea without giving it something of the richness of his sensibility; Baudelaire gave to others his vibrancy, perhaps the only excuse for egotism.

Did he miss these friends in his exile? In Belgium he had no one but Poulet-Malassis, and like an old man he concentrated his affections upon him. He learned that good talk could console one for the loss of other pleasures; but unfortunately "Coco-Malperché", as he called him, lived on the outskirts of Brussels, too far away to see often.

One new friend he had made: — Félicien Rops the

etcher, whom he probably met at his parents' house in Malines. That gay and gruesome young Juvenal of the burin was then making coffins for a living at Brussels. Baudelaire explained to him the drawing with the symbolic skeleton he had wished to use as a frontispiece for his poems, and demanded in vain from Delacroix and Bracquemond. Rops executed the design, which in 1866 served as frontispiece for an edition of his suppressed poems and later verses called "Les Épaves."

This volume, published at Brussels, contains the six poems excised from "Les Fleurs du mal" in 1857, most of the scurrilous verse, of no high quality, written in Belgium against things Belgian, and some other poems not contained in the second edition of "Les Fleurs du mal", and for the most part written during the years 1861–1864.

In the summer of 1865 Ancelle again sent money for his long postponed journey. The poet was at first ashamed to use it, but decided that he would. "*Literature must come before everything*," he wrote, underlining the words with the nervous fury that scores all his later letters, "*before my digestion, before my pleasure, before my mother.*" This means that he may not have time to visit her then, because of his haste to return to his purgatory and finish his book. But he intends to end his life with her, in the cottage by the sea.

He could have finished his book without seeing the five towns he had planned to include, and constantly put off visiting. Instead of this he wrote

Ancelle: "*I am in a state of penance and I shall stay in it.*" And he postponed his departure once more.

He talks of the "fatality" oppressing him. And he glories in his life-tragedy. When Janin pilloried the gloomy and ironic type of poet in an article, Baudelaire wrote a long reply, defending Byron and his brothers, defending himself. Yet he did not send the reply to a review: the manuscript was found among his papers.

Among them too was found a preface for a third edition of his poems. He had intended in the second edition to reveal all the secrets of his art, and "teach any one to do the same thing." Now he writes: "I have no desire to demonstrate, nor astonish, nor amuse, nor convince. I have my nerves and my indispositions. I aspire to an absolute repose and an unending night. A singer of the wild pleasures of wine and opium, I thirst only for a liquor unknown on earth, and which the pharmacopœia of heaven itself could not offer me: a liquor which would contain neither vitality, nor death, nor excitation, nor nothingness. Not to know anything, not to teach anything, not to will anything, not to feel anything, but to sleep and sleep, such is to-day my only aspiration."

He could not even indicate what poems were to be added to the third edition, for his papers were at Honfleur. He could not finish "Le spleen de Paris" in his ennui and nostalgia. He advises Madame Meurice to be thankful for her illness: "Pass through the furnace; every one gains by it." He asks her to

tell Manet that raillery, insults and injustice are excellent things, and that he would be ungrateful if he did not give thanks for them. But while his spirit gains in Christian humility, his flesh is weakening and his nerves are frayed by his disease. He circulates vile slanders about himself: he is a pæderast, he has killed his father and eaten him. And he laughs when his hearers swallow his stories.

In July harsh necessity pricked him out of his sloth and forced him to depart at last. Poulet-Malassis had offered to sell him very cheaply the note he had signed. He had to purchase it or repay to others the full amount, for his publisher was obliged to sell this note in his need of money. So Baudelaire who a month before had been wearing a bandage on his congested head, even when going to the post office to seek money he dared not have sent to his hotel, made his long-delayed trip to Paris and to Honfleur, where his mother paid once more. On his return to the capital, he called upon Madame Meurice and left a note for Sainte-Beuve. His friends found him a bit heavier in form and features, possibly because poverty had made him seek Nepenthe in beer instead of wine. But he could not stay with them; he dared not show himself for fear of creditors; after a few days he returned to Brussels the city of his penance.

His penance was a sense of his own impotence, of his decaying mind and will. He had thought to spend only a few days in Belgium to see five more towns; he did not visit them as he was waiting for money from the capital. At Paris, his literary agent

did nothing for him. Ancelle offered his services, which were gratefully accepted, but Ancelle was slow in answering. No one he had need of answered him, he complained.

He called on Victor Hugo, who had now left the island he had made famous and taken a house in Brussels. "Either he has tired of the Ocean, or the Ocean has tired of him", comments Baudelaire. But one of Hugo's daughters-in-law could play Wagner, and to Madame Hugo he could talk of her former lover Sainte-Beuve! Her illustrious spouse he could not bear, but he wrote Ancelle — his "dear Ancelle", now that he was working for him: "What irritates me more than everything, more than my poverty, more than Victor Hugo who has tired me so much, more than the stupidity encompassing me, is a certain somnolent condition which makes me doubt my intellectual powers."

He might have been warned by this somnolence, he who had once "been able to work twelve hours together." Did he work at all during this winter of 1865–1866? We may doubt it. But he had the will to work, and when he could not think, he copied; there exist three manuscripts of the plan of "Belgium." Copying gave him the illusion of working.

Winter came on. He was penniless now, and thus virtually imprisoned in his hotel. In December he could not send his mother her gift, and he writes Ancelle to tell him honestly how she is. "Sometimes I imagine I shall not see her again." He begs his guardian for another small advance on the pension

now anticipated for years ahead, so as to pay his hated landlady. By her scenes she is making him "ill with anger and shame." And he explains why the letter is not prepaid: "I cannot do otherwise."

His winter neuralgia made the bandage necessary again, and his physician gave him pills containing opium. At first unwilling to take them he is finally obliged to do so, tripling the doses because of his previous abuse of the drug. With beclouded and wavering head he went out to have his belated gift to his mother packed; and he wrote her again, furious at the injustice of fame: ". . . If ever I can recover the vigor and energy I once enjoyed, I shall give vent to my anger by frightful books. I should like to set the whole human race against me . . . that would console me for everything." He had "lived for a fortnight on opium, digitalis and belladonna."

Naturally he says nothing of this to his mother, in his solicitous New Year's letter. He begs her for a photograph — a large one, with a soft focus. "My thoughts are always directed toward you . . . and then I see again all my childhood at your side, in the Rue Hautefeuille and the Rue Saint-André-des-Arts." As he was writing, his mother was suffering from a paralytic stroke that crippled her legs, and he wrote her physician for uncensored news.

But soon he too was "obliged to live flat on his back." Before mid-January he lay in his hotel room, forbidden all stimulants, forbidden even to read,

penniless, and too poor to buy the Vichy water prescribed for him. "My debts, my inability to work, the trusteeship, your health, the affair with Garnier (the publisher) — all that makes a tumult in my brain, and my inability to move increases this tumult. . . . I am now an oyster."

To Asselineau he describes his symptoms and asks advice. "In January and even now (February 6), while fasting and without apparent cause, I suddenly feel a little unsteadiness, inattention and stupor, and then fearful pains in the head and vertigo. Even if I am sitting, I have to fall. Then comes a cold sweat and vomitings of bile or white foam. Then a fairly long period of stupor." But in spite of his inability to hold his attention and the prohibition of his physician, he read in bed Sainte-Beuve's poems. Then he wrote his master listing all his old favorites: "in reality one changes very little." He read Shelley again and cites from the "Stanzas written in dejection":

> . . . I am one
> Whom men love not, and yet regret. . . .

Sainte-Beuve consulted his physician and sent advice. Madame Victor Hugo sent him her family doctor. Five times Baudelaire thought he was well, only to find upon rising that he had to collapse again on his bed, amid falling chairs. He was now eager to go home and live with his mother. He notes in his diary that henceforth memories which he had so long enjoyed alone "must be shared

with another." Enraged by the delays of his agent at Paris he decides that he will go there March fifteenth. "Every one is forgetting me."

The contrary was really true. He had been asked to contribute to the anthology "Le Parnasse contemporain." He had received from Paris articles acclaiming him as a master — one of them by the unknown Paul Verlaine. But he marked with dismay these imitators: "I love nothing so much as to be alone."

Unable to rise, he added to his diary. "How many presentiments and signs already sent by heaven, that it is high time to act. . . . By putting off what one has to do, one runs the risk of never being able to do it. By putting off conversion, one runs the risk of being damned." In his diaries we may trace the history of his return to his faith.

As early as 1857 he consoles himself for the misunderstanding caused by his poems: "Know therefore the joys of a bitter life, and pray, pray without ceasing. Prayer is a storehouse of energy. . . . There is a magic operation in prayer. Prayer is one of the great forces of intellectual dynamics. It is like an electric current."

"God and his profundity . . . God is the eternal confidant in the tragedy of which each man is the hero."

Perhaps he found a devotional medal among his mementos, or the rosary of his childhood. For he mentions "the power of amulets", and notes that "the rosary is prayer put within the reach of all." Again we find: "The moral dynamics of Jesus. . . .

The sacraments are the means of these dynamics."

Then comes a prayer made after his mother was stricken:

"Do not chastise me in my mother, nor chastise my mother because of me. . . . I commend to God the souls of my father and of Mariette. — Give me each day strength to perform the present duty and thus to become a hero and a saint." His dandyism has become a spiritual ideal.

And his "penance" in Belgium brought him at last a sense of purification. He prayed at night, fearing never to waken, because "the man who prays is a captain who posts his sentinels: he can sleep." He worked and copied; he wrote ninety letters that last year — one hundred and eighty-four closely printed pages, not including those to Madame Aupick. He prayed for daily "strength to do his duty", and those letters were his first duty.[1]

So he had his reward. It came to him in a flash one morning, like the joy of returning health, and he noted in his journal:

"Prayer: charity, wisdom and strength.

[1] The very last entry in the diary is a prayer:

"I swear to myself henceforth to take the following rules as eternal rules of my life: Every morning to pray to God, *reservoir of all strength and all justice, to my father, to Mariette and to Poe*, as intercessors: to pray to them to grant me the necessary strength always to do my duty, and to grant my mother *a life long enough* to enjoy my transformation; to work all day, or *at least while my strength remains;* to trust in God, that is, Justice itself, for the success of my projects; to make every evening a new prayer to God, asking life and strength for my mother and for myself; to divide all I earn into four parts, — one for current expenses, one for my creditors, one for my friends and one for my mother; — to obey the precepts of the strictest sobriety, of which the first is the suppression of all stimulants, whatever they may be."

"Without charity, I am but a tinkling cymbal.

"My humiliations have been mercies of God. Is my egotistical phase at an end?"

There are many ways to escape from self, including Flaubert's religion of Art, but there is no path that is not a religion, leading to some infinity.

Baudelaire arose from his sick bed in March, eager to finish his notes and return to his mother. "I have been deprived of you for two years more than I thought I would be, after having been deprived so long already." He would revisit Malines, for Rops' father-in-law had invited him, and once more see Saint-Loup, that gem of Jesuit churches, with its "sinister and gallant" interior, "like a catafalque of sable embroidered with rose and silver." And he was stricken down before the richly carved confessionals, while pointing out their beauties to Rops and Poulet-Malassis.

Baudelaire claimed that his foot had slipped, but this time it was serious. The next day his brain was confused, then his tongue. He was taken back to Brussels, where in a dictated letter he still refused to leave until five more days of note-taking had completed his task. In a month the paralysis extended over his whole right side and destroyed his power of speech. He who had so long been a spectator of life was to end his days as a spectator of his own death struggle.

Ancelle came, then the poet's mother. But the physician refused to let her take him to Honfleur.

In July the sick man was conducted to Paris by Poulet-Malassis and Arthur Stevens. Asselineau met them at the station. Baudelaire recognized him from afar with a ghastly peal of laughter.

He was put into a private hospital at Paris, and given a good room, adorned with two of Manet's paintings. He ate with the other boarders and was once even allowed to be taken out to dine with friends. Madame Sabatier came to see him; Madame Meurice played Wagner to him.

As his mother's presence exasperated him she was sent back to Honfleur where she stayed until the following spring. For Baudelaire's martyrdom lasted eighteen months: he took to his bed in May, and died in his mother's arms on the thirty-first of August, 1867, having accepted the last rites of the church. She believed that he still recognized her.

But all who have watched beside a death bed shrouded with partial stupor know what ghosts arise and walk around it in the dimmed eyes of the dying. It is permissible to think that all the "beloved corpses" of the poet's early memories came to life again, in those hours of delirium which are either the earnest of Heaven or its brief reality. His first loves were what he recognized, that spirit prisoned in inanimate flesh and longing for a timeless world of shades.

Baudelaire's friends helped Madame Aupick make arrangements for the funeral. They would have liked Sainte-Beuve or Gautier to speak at the tomb. But neither was to be depended upon, so it was

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Asselineau and Banville who promised to defend their dead comrade against the calumnies of the press. One editor had gone so far as to state that the poet had died raving mad in an asylum. The Catholic Veuillot alone was sympathetic: "God has had mercy on his soul which he himself kept in bondage."

The burial took place on the second of September, after a religious service in the church of Saint-Honoré at Passy. A hundred friends and men of letters attended. The heat was stifling, and fewer followed the body to the family vault in the Montparnasse Cemetery. As the hearse entered the gate it was greeted by a single appalling clap of thunder. That tocsin almost put to flight the last of the faithful. Neither the Author's Society nor the Government was represented in the group that heard the eulogies, and in their disappointment Asselineau and Banville unconsciously hurried their reading.

And then Baudelaire was laid to rest in the family vault where his mother was to join him four years later — laid away beside the body of his stepfather, moldering in a gold-braided general's uniform and swathed with the red scarf of Grand Officer of the Légion d'honneur.

END

INDEX

"A CELLE QUI EST TROP GAIE", 124, quoted 141.
"A une dame créole", quoted 31–32.
"A une heure du matin", 223.
"A une Malabaraise", 45 note, 49, 90.
Abel et Cain", 135.
Academy, the French, 190–191.
Ahriman, 121.
"Albertus", by Gautier, 21, 134.
Alençon, 123.
"Allégorie", 45*n*.
America, 106.
Ancelle, 70, 91, 95, 185, 202, 235, 239, 241, 245, 246, 248.
"Antiquitées d'Herculanum", 12.
Arondel, 40, 71, 115, 234.
Asselineau, 86, 124, 242, 244, 250, 254, 255.
"Au lecteur", 122*n*, 127, 128.
Aupick, Madame, Preface, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 25, 26, 27, 61, 62, 70, 72, 93, 99, 112, 114, 115, 116, 140, 159, 160, 162, 164, 185, 186, 187, 189, 201, 202, 203, 231, 236, 237, 238, 242, 245, 248, 249, 250, 252, 254, 255.
Aupick, General (Colonel), Preface, 12, 13, 14, 16, 24, 26, 29, 30, 32, 35, 40, 70, 72, 92, 93, 94, 99, 115, 159, 160, 255.
Autard, Madame, 31, 91.
"Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés", quoted 51.

BABOU, HIPPOLYTE, 122.
Ballanche, 15.
Balzac, 22, 27, 30, 33, 36, 85, 87, 88, 97, 105, 126, 164*n*.
Banville, 39, 45, 123, 199, 255.
Barbey d'Aurevilly, 42, 43, 124, 154, 202.
Barbier, Auguste, 191.
Barthet, Armand, 93.
Baudelaire, Charles-Pierre, Preface; is only revealed in letters to his mother, 3; ancestry and parentage, 4–7; early love of theater, 9; of Church and its pomps, 10; first readings, 11–12; his mother's remarriage and his reaction, 13; put in boarding school at Lyons, 14; his sufferings and joys there, 15–18; his problem stated, 19; put in boarding school at Paris, 20; trip to the Pyrenees, 20; his gloom and his readings, 21; influence of Old Paris, 22; discovers Sainte-Beuve, 23; expelled from school, 24; results of his formal education, 25–26; his stepfather's plans for him, 26; his first literary contacts and his first revolt, 27–28; his first mistress, 28; quarrels with stepfather, 29; is sent on voyage to Mauritius and Bourbon, 31–32; returns to Paris, 32; decides to become a man of letters, 33; the young rebel, 35; becomes a dandy, 36; leaves home, 37; his lodgings, 38–39; first extravagances, 40; his costume, 41; life of the Romantic dandy of that time, 41–43; recites first verses, 44; new literary contacts, 45; becomes disciple of Gautier, 46; his religion of plastic beauty, 47; meets Jeanne Duval, 48; her appeal to him, 49–51; relates his passion in "La Fanfarlo", 52 *sqq*.; a self-portrait, 53–54; his love of the ballet, 56; his delight in gastronomic pleasures, 57; is caught in a *collage*, 58; his suffering revealed in other writings, 58–60; and in poems, 61; his rebellions and his surrenders, 61–63; his reconciliations inspire "Le balcon", 64–65; verses to Jeanne outline

Baudelaire, Charles-Pierre (*Cont.*)
a metaphysics of ignominy, 67; is tortured too by his idealism, 68; his fortune is put in trust, 70; seeks escape in wine and opium, 71; his burlesque attempt at suicide, 72; sets to work at art-criticism, 73; the first "Salons" and his championship of Delacroix, 75–85; his analysis of color in painting, 77–78; the "correspondances" of sense-impressions, 79; Delacroix's methods and his greatness, 80–83; colors in Baudelaire's verse, 82; conclusion of "Salon" vaunts the beauty of modern life, 85; Baudelaire now a literary Bohemian, 86; his first literary criticism, 87–89; takes part in Revolution of 1848, 90; edits revolutionary newspaper, 92; goes to Dijon, 94; disillusionized concerning politics, 96; he discovers Poe, 97; plans novels, 98; turns from drugs to writing, 99; Jeanne makes translating impossible, 101; he decides to leave her, 102; falls in love again, 103; translated Poe because he resembled him and justified him, 104–105; desire of self-justification seen in essay he writes, 105–109; his Catholic background seen in other essays, 110; his sufferings like Poe's, 111–115; he resumes work when his mother returns, 115; treats fine arts in Exposition of 1855, 116–118; the Poe translations, 119; comparison of the two poets, 120–121; "Les Fleurs du mal", history of volume and of title, first used for poems published in 1855, 122; printing of volume, 123–124; its inculpation and condemnation, 124–125; its originality is autobiographic, 125; and its bizarre qualities not new, 126–127; Catholic basis of work, 128; its structure analyzed (first edition), 129–138; Madame Sabatier, a new love, 139; Baudelaire begins writing her anonymous verses, 140; which he sends her while he returns to Jeanne, 142–145; who leaves him finally, 146; he reveals himself to Madame Sabatier just before his trial, 147–148; she loves and he retreats, 149–153; she becomes his friend only, 154; Baudelaire's melancholia in 1857, 157–158; turns to his mother, again widowed, 159; she at first repulses his advances toward reconciliation, 159–161; his illness and use of laudanum, 162; his belief in the Devil, 163; goes to Honfleur, 164; writes new poems, 164–165; and treats Salon of 1859, 165–166; uses drug-dreams in his verses, 166–167; and in "Paradis artificiels", 168; his experiences with hasheesh and their effects, 169; which are seen in new verses for second edition of poems, 170–174; more tragic themes used, 175–179; Baudelaire's first "shock", 179–180; his discovery of Wagner, 181; meeting with J. G. F., 182–183; Preface of "Paradis artificiels", 184; his melancholia and thoughts of suicide, 185–186; publication of second edition of "Les Fleurs du mal", 188; his despair and his prayers, 188–189; his troubles increased by Jeanne, 190; seeks a rehabilitation in candidacy for the French Academy, 191–192; meets Alfred de Vigny, 192; fears insanity, 193; Wagner's music reveals to him the nature of his genius, 195; his account of Tannhäuser in the Wagner article, 196–198; his literary criticism, articles on contemporary writers, 198–200; his sloth, his vexations caused by Jeanne and by Ancelle, 201–202; his hatred of Paris and his lethargy, 202–204; his macabre pleasures, 205; he leaves for Belgium, 205; resumé of his last writings, 206–230; last poems, written after the second edition appeared, 208; themes treated: love, 208–209; fear of death, 210; belief in

the Devil, 211–213; his prose-poems, their origin, 214–215; in them he puts his longings, 216–217; his need of escape from self in others, 219–221; or in travel, 222–223; and his constant need of emotion, 224–225; while his last pages on Delacroix and the study of Guys the artist show that Baudelaire is still a dandy at heart, 226–230; effects of the Belgian exile, 231; his lectures at Brussels, 232–234; fails to sell his books to Belgian publisher, 234; plans satirical book on Belgium in revenge for disillusions there, 235; works on Poe translations, 236; but does no work of his own, 238; adds to his vitriolic diary opinions of modern civilization, 239–240; and of women, 240–241; the poem to Berthe and the drawing of Jeanne, 241–242; early religious memories return, 243; his friends clamor for his return, 243–244; Rops and "Les Epaves", 245; preface for third edition of "Les Fleurs du mal", 246; he returns to France to borrow money from mother, 247; goes back to Belgium to his "penance" there, 247; his growing somnolence, his lethargy and his cerebral congestions, 248–250; diary shows his return to the Church, 251–253; his temporary recovery and his paralytic stroke, 253–254; his return to Paris and months of illness there, 254; his death and obsequies, 254–255.
Baudelaire's father, Preface, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 16, 55.
Baudelaire's half-brother, 6, 202.
Baudelaire's mother, *see* Madame Aupick.
Beethoven, 194, 200.
Belgium, Preface, 95, 203, 207, 215, 225, 229, 231–254.
"Bénédiction", 128.
Béranger, 124.
"Berenice", 107, 120.
Bergson, 110.
Berlioz, 194.
Berthe, 241.
Bertrand, Aloyius, 214.
Birotteau, 85.
Boileau, 26.
Bonaparte, Louis, 97.
Bordeaux, 30, 32.
Borel, Petrus, 27, 28, 199.
Boschetti, Amina, 243.
Bossuet, 128, 165.
Bouilhet, 142.
Boulevard Saint-Germain, 8.
Bourbon, island of, 32.
Bracquemond, 184, 245.
Brenghel, 161 *n.*
Broise, de, 123.
"Brumes et pluies", quoted 133.
Bronzino, 74.
Brummell, 41.
Brussels, 205, 232, 245, 247, 253.
Brutus, 92.
Buisson, 92.
Bürger's "Lénore", 126.
Byron, 37, 41, 43, 157, 160, 200, 246.

Cabala, 26, 53.
Cabanis, 6.
Café de la Rotonde, 92.
Café Lemblin, 122.
Café Riche, 157.
Cain, 135.
Calcutta, 30.
Cape of Good Hope, 30.
Cardan, Jérôme, 53.
Carrefour de Buci, 92.
Catholic and religious ideas, 81, 87, 100, 110, 128, 135, 196–198, 200, 201, 211–213, 231, 243, 251–243.
"Causerie", 131.
Ceylon, 30.
"Chacun sa chimère", 224.
Champagne, 5.
Champfleury, 52, 74, 87, 89, 90, 92, 112, 238.
"Chant d' automne", quoted 175.
Charenton, 44.

Charles X, 10.
Charlet, 161*n.*
Chateaubriand, 165.
Châteauroux, 95.
Chaussée du Maine, 44.
Choderlos de Laclos, 238.
"Choix de maximes consolantes sur l'amour", 158.
"Ciel brouillé", 130, quoted 131, 217.
Cladel, Léon, 200, 225.
Clemm, Mrs., 102, 106.
Clésinger, 140, 142.
Club des Haschischins, 71.
Collège Louis-le-Grand, 20, 40.
"Comédie de la mort", 126.
Condorcet, 6.
"Confession", 122*n.*, quoted 143.
"Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs", 88–89.
Constantinople, Preface, 94.
"Contrat social", 11.
Corneille, 121.
Corot, 166*n.*
Corsaire-Satan, 52, 58, 87.
Coup d'état, the, 96, 97, 98.
Cousin, Victor, Preface, 68.
Crébillon the Younger, 53.
Crépet, 115, 198.
Cruikshank, 161*n.*
"Curiosités esthétiques", 75, 162, 180.

Daguerre, 165.
"Danse macabre", 164, 166*n.*, 171, 172.
"Dante and Virgil in Hell", 81.
Daudet's "Le petit Chose", 15; his "Sapho", 52.
Daumier, 161*n.*
David, J. L., 80.
"De profundis clamavi", 112, 122*n.*
De Quincey's "Opium Eater", Preface 168, 169.
"Déjà!", 221.
Delacroix, Eugène, 40, 70, 75, 76, 78, 80–83, 117, 118, 166*n.*, 181, 226, 232, 245.
Delatouche, 27.
Deroy, 35.
Desbordes-Valmore, Madame, 199.
Desnoyers, Fernand, 214.
Diderot, 121.
Dijon, 94, 95, 98.
"Don Juan aux enfers", quoted 37. 45*n.*, 90.
Don Juan de Maraña, 37, 59, 126, 130,
Dorothée, 49.
"Dreamland", 107.
"Du vin et du haschisch", 100.
Duc d'Orléans, 27.
DuCamp, Maxime, 105, 112, 127, 142, 177.
"Duellum", 63.
Dumas *père*, 142, 234.
Dupont, 90.
Duval, Jeanne, Preface, 48, 49, 50, 56–67, 68, 78, 91, 93, 94, 95, 101, 102, 103, 114, 119, 130, 139, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 152, 154, 164, 165, 175, 183, 186, 190, 201, 235, 242, 245.
Duval, the wine-merchant, 44.

Ecole des Chartes, 123.
"Elevation", quoted 69, 129.
Emerson, 226.
Emon, 159.
Empress Eugénie, 124, 147.
"Encyclopédie", the, 11.
"Enivrez-vous", quoted 225–226.
Esquiros, Doctor, 45.
"Eureka", 119.
Exposition of 1855, 116.

"Faust", 27.
"Femmes damnées", 24, 124, 134.
Fénelon's "Télémaque", 81.
Feydeau, Ernest, 142.
Figaro, 124, 235.
Flaubert, Gustave, Preface, 36, 47, 127; 142, 147, 161, 183, 191, 201, 202, 211, 253.
Fontainebleau, 202, 214.
Fourier, 169.
Fragonard, 7.
Fraisse, Armand, 97.
"Franciscæ meæ laudes", 59.

Fromentin, 77.
"Fusées", 240.

"Gaspard de la nuit", 214.
Gautier, Judith, 140.
Gautier, Théophile, 21, 28, 36, 41, 45, 46, 47, 57, 59, 71, 88, 126, 128, 134, 142, 150, 160, 164, 191, 202, 217, 233, 254.
Gavarni, 161*n*.
Gérard de Nerval, 27, 186.
Gérôme, 166*n*.
Goncourt Journal, 157.
Goya, 74, 161*n*.
Grandville, 161*n*.
Griswold, 103, 106, 120.
Guys, Constantin, 185, 227–230.

Hamlet, 40, 120.
"Harmonie du soir", 17, 149.
Heine, 80.
Helvétius, 6.
"Hernani", 20, 41, 80.
Hildebrand, Pope, 10.
"Histoires grotesques et sérieuses", 119, 236.
Hoffmann, 105.
Hoffmann's "Kreisleriana", 79.
Hogarth, 161*n*.
Honfleur, 159, 162, 164, 210, 219, 236, 246, 247, 254.
Hôtel Pimodan, 38, 39, 40, 71, 140.
d'Houdetot, Madame, 103.
Houssaye, Arsène, 215.
Hugo, Victor, Preface, 20, 21, 28, 40, 41, 45, 80, 126, 160, 166, 198, 201, 219, 234, 248.
Hugo, Madame Victor, 248, 250.
"Hymne", quoted 145.
"Hymne à la Beauté", quoted 47–48.

Ile Saint-Louis, 38.
Illuminés, 15.
Ingres, 80, 83.

J. G. F., 182–184, 191, 217.
Janin, 126, 246.
"Je n'ai pas oublié. . ." quoted 8, 45*n*.
"Je t'adore à l'égal de la voûte nocturne", 45*n*., quoted 50.

"L'albatros", quoted 33, 45*n*., 54.
"L'alchimie de la douleur", quoted 172.
"L'âme du vin", 45*n*., 72.
"L'Amour et le crâne", 122*n*.
"L'amour du mensonge", quoted 182–183.
"L'Art romantique", 180.
"L'aube spirituelle", 122*n*., quoted 144.
"L'avertisseur", quoted 210.
"L'école païenne", 100.
"L'élixir de longue vie", 126.
"L'ennemi", 122*n*.
"L'essence du rire", 110.
"L'examen de minuit", 204, 211.
"L'héautontimoroumenos", quoted 66, 111; 131, 170, 182.
"L'homme et la mer", quoted 34.
"L'horloge", quoted 174.
"L'horreur sympathique", 172.
"L'idéal", 112, 130.
"L'imprévu", 204, quoted 211–212, 213.
"L'invitation au voyage", 122*n*., 131.
"L'irrémédiable", 134.
"L'irréparable", 48, 70, 122*n*.
"La Béatrice", 122*n*.
"La Belgique", 235, 248.
"La belle Dorothée", 222.
"La Bohême", 27.
La Bruyère, 11.
"La chambre double", 221.
"La chevelure", 176, quoted 177.
"La chevelure" (prose-poem), 222.
"La cloche fêlée", quoted 99–100, 112, 122*n*., 132, 170.
"La corde", 221.
"La destruction", 122*n*.
"La Fanfarlo", 17, 52–58, 90, 132, 142.
"La femme sauvage et la petite-maîtresse", 218.
La Fontaine, 13.
"La géante", 45*n*., 130.
"La morale du joujou", 110.
"La Mort", 136.

"La mort des amants", 112.
"La mort des artistes", 112, quoted 113, 137.
"La muse malade", 129.
"La muse vénale", quoted 73, 129.
La Presse, 215.
"La prière d'un païen", 208.
"La rançon", 154, quoted 155–156, 208.
La Semaine théâtrale, 112.
"La servante au grand cœur. . .", 15, 45*n*.
"La vie antérieure", 122*n*., 129.
"La voix", 11, 12.
Lacordaire, 192.
Lacroix, 234.
Lamartine, 20, 21, 107, 129, 191, 241.
"Laquelle est la vraie?", 216.
Lavater, 11, 107.
"Le balcon", quoted 64–65.
"Le beau navire", 60, 131, 242.
"Le Confiteor de l'artiste", 210.
Le Constitutionnel, 191.
"Le coucher du soleil romantique", quoted 193.
"Le crépuscule du soir", quoted 22, 45*n*.
"Le cygne", 165.
"Le désespoir de la vieille", 218.
"Le flacon", 149, 154, quoted 155.
"Le galant tireur", 218.
"Le gouffre", 210.
"Le goût du Néant", 173.
"Le guignon", 122*n*.
Le Havre, 177, 222.
"Le jeune enchanteur", 46.
"Le Léthé", quoted 62, 124.
"Le masque", 166*n*.
"Le mauvais moine", 111.
"Le mauvais vitrier", 107, 211.
Le Messager de l'assemblée, 112.
"Le mort joyeux", 112, quoted 113.
"Le Parnasse contemporain", 251.
Le Pays, 115, 116.
"Le poison", quoted 71, 130.
"Le port", 222.
"Le portrait", quoted 176.
"Le rebelle", 35, 45*n*.
"Le reniement de Saint Pierre", 122*n*.
Le Salut public, 92.
"Le serpent qui danse", 60.
"Le squelette laboureur", 171, quoted 172.
"Le Spleen de Paris," *see* "Poèmes en prose."
"Le tonneau de la haine", 112, 113, 122*n*.
"Le vampire", quoted 61.
Le Vavasseur, 27, 93.
"Le Vin", 136.
"Le vin de l'assassin", 23, 45*n*., 72, 113.
"Le voyage", quoted 12, 165, 166*n*., quoted 177–178.
Leconte de Lisle, 25, 45, 90, 124, 191, 198, 200.
Légion d'honneur, 162, 191, 255.
Lemonnier, Camille, 233.
"Les aveugles", 171.
"Les bienfaits de la lune", quoted 217.
"Les bijoux", 57, 124.
"Les bohémiens", 129.
"Les chats", 90, 112, 132.
"Les correspondances", quoted 79, 129.
"Les drames et les romans honnêtes", 100.
"Les Epaves", 245.
"Les fenêtres", 219.
"Les Fleurs du mal", Preface, 26, 45, 67, 69, 85, 86, 120, 122–137, 138, 148, 159, 160, 164, 169, 171–179, 180; 2nd edition published, 188; 199, 213, 216, 218, 220, 224, 246.
"Les foules", 220.
"Les hiboux", 112, 132.
"Les Lesbiennes", 122, 134.
"Les limbes", 122.
"Les litanies de Satan", quoted 135–136.
"Les métamorphoses du vampire", 124, 134.
"Les Misérables", 201, 219.
"Les nuages", 217.
"Les petites vieilles", 165, quoted 218, 219.
"Les phares", quoted 74, 76, 81, 129.
"Les plaintes d'un Icare", quoted 206.

"Les projets", 222.
"Les sept vieillards", 23, 165, 171.
"Les tentations", 223.
"Les veuves", 219.
"Les yeux de Berthe", 241.
"Les yeux de mon enfant" (Les yeux de Berthe?), 45*n.*, quoted 48.
"Lesbos", 124, 134.
"Lettres intimes", 3.
Lévy the publisher, 122, 161.
Lewis' "The Monk", 12, 50, 241.
"Ligeia", 99, 118, 139.
Lilith, 50.
Liszt, 194.
"Lives of the Saints", 10, 50.
Longfellow, 186.
Louchette, 28, 29, 58.
Louis-Philippe, 90.
Louvre, the, 62, 63, 73, 74.
Luxembourg Gardens, 4, 7, 54.
Lyons, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 29, 54, 84, 106, 132.

"Madame Bovary", 147, 161.
"Mademoiselle de Maupin", 36, 46, 217
"MademoiselleLancet"("Mademoiselle Bistouri"), 221.
Madrid, 99, 101.
"Madrigal triste", quoted 208–209.
Magianism, 69.
Maistre, Joseph de, 96, 110, 117.
Malherbe, 26, 128.
Malines, 235, 243, 253.
Manet, 56, 243, 247, 254.
Marat, 95.
"Marginalia", 119, 189, 240.
Marie (Daubrun?), 115, 116, 131, 146.
Marie the artists' model, 103, 140.
Mariette the nurse, 11, 12, 15, 109, 252.
"Mateo Falcone", 126.
Maturin, 199, 200, 209.
Mauclair, M'Camille, 119.
Mauritius, 30, 31, 32, 91, 132.
Meissonier, 83, 140, 142.
"Mémoires d'un suicidé", 127.
Ménard, Louis, 25, 45, 87, 88, 90.
Mephisto, 95.
Mérimée, 126, 191, 226.
Méryon, 187.
Meurice, Madame Paul, 244, 246, 247, 254.
Millet, 166*n.*
Milton, 12, 135.
"Mœsta et errabunda", 17, 18, 122*n.*, 132.
Molière, 11.
"Mon cœur mis à nu", 240.
Moniteur universel, 119.
Monnier, Henry, 142, 161*n.*
Montesquieu, 11, 165.
Montparnasse Cemetery, 255.
Montsouris, 44.
Moore, George, 46.
Moreau, Hippolite, 200.
"Morella", 99, 118.
Mosselmann, 140, 141, 144, 150, 152.
Murger, 27, 89.
Musset, 17, 21, 37, 107, 124, 126, 142, 199, 216, 241.

Nadar, 236.
Naigeon, 7.
Napoleon, 43, 46.
"Narrative of A. Gordon Pym", 108, 119, 161, 162.
Neo-Platonism, 69; *see* Plotinus.
Nethersole, Olga, 52.
Neuilly, 8, 9, 39, 91, 190.
Nietzsche, 92, 93.
Notre-Dame, cathedral of, 10.
"Notre-Dame de Paris", 126.

"Obsession", 15, quoted 173.
"Œuvres posthumes", 105*n.*
Old Paris, 4, 22, 23.
Ormuzd, 121.
Ourliac, 27, 88.
"Ovide chez les Scythes", 166*n.*

Panthéon, the, 24.
"Paradis artificiels", 3, 163, 168–171, 180, 184, 185, 220, 234.
"Paradise Lost", 12.
"Parfum exotique", 49, 131, 176.
Parker, Theodore, 231.

Pascal, 210.
Pater, Walter, 121.
Pension Bailly, the, 24, 28, 44.
Petronius, 238.
Piaget Shanks, 75.
Pinelli, 161*n*.
Place Saint-André-des-Arts, 8.
Plotinus, 53, 67, 68–69, 80.
Plutarch, 11.
"Pluviose irrité contre la ville entière", 112.
Poe, Edgar A., Preface, 19, 21, 87, 97, 98–101, 102, 103, 104–121, 122, 139, 158, 161, 162, 181, 189, 190, 200, 203, 216, 220, 237, 240, 252.
"Poèmes en prose", 9, 99, 180, 214–225, 237, 246.
"Poèmes nocturnes", 180.
Porphyrus, 53.
Poulet-Malassis, 123, 124, 150, 161, 163, 167, 180, 181, 182, 186, 187, 203, 237, 244, 247, 253, 254.
Prarond, 29, 44.
Préault, 141.
Prose-poems, *see* "Poèmes en prose".
Prud'hon, 7.
Pyrenees, 20, 21.

Rabelais, 11, 53.
Racine, 26, 127, 134.
Radcliffe, Anne, 47.
Ramey, 7.
Rastignac, 85.
Realists, 166.
"Recueillement", quoted 204.
"Remords posthume", quoted 63, 122*n*.
"René", 22, 23.
"Rêve parisien", 166, quoted 167, 170, 171.
"Réversibilité", 122*n*., quoted 142.
"Révolte", 134, 135.
Revolution, the French, 5–6.
Revolution of 1848, 90–93, 95–97.
Revue européenne, 198.
Revue fantaisiste, 198.
Revue de Paris, 101, 105, 112.
Revue des deux mondes, 122, 145.
Ricard, 149, 142.
Robespierre, 95.
Romanticists, 21, 36, 41, 46, 55, 71, 85, 89.
"Romeo and Juliet", 117.
Rops, Félicien, 243–244, 250.
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 103, 189.
Rousseau, Théodore, 84, 166*n*.
Rubempré, Lucien de, 27.
Rubens, 81.
Rue de la Tombe-Issoire, 44.
Rue du Bac, 8.
Rue Hautefeuille, 4, 8, 249.
Rue Jean-Jacques-Rousseau, 149.
Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, 249.

Sabatier, Madame, Preface, 139–155, 162, 174, 183, 185, 254.
Saint Anthony, 50.
Saint Honoré, church of, at Passy, 255.
Saint Loup, church of, at Malines, 253.
Saint Peter, 135.
Sainte-Beuve, 22, 23, 24, 45, 54, 105, 124, 128, 149, 162, 164, 185, 191–192, 202, 214, 243, 247, 248, 250, 254.
Sainte-Gudule, church of, 243.
"Salammbô", 201.
"Salon de 1845", 75, 86, 118.
"Salon de 1846", 75–85, 90, 118, 122.
San Domingo, 49.
"Sapho", *see* Daudet.
Satan, 135.
Second Empire, 227.
"Sed non satiata", quoted 60, 65.
"Semper eadem", quoted 175.
Shelley, Preface, 250.
"Sonnet d'automne", 116, 175.
"Spleen", quoted, 3, 132, 158.
"Spleen et idéal", 132, 134.
"Stances à Sainte-Beuve", 21, 24, 26.
"Stanzas to Helen", 103, 140, 144.
Stendhal, 68, 150, 227.
Sterne, Lawrence, 53.
Stevens, Arthur, 232, 254.
Stœpel, Robert, 186.
Stoke-Newington, 105.
Sue, Eugène, 22, 89, 98.

Swedenborg, 68, 169.
Swinburne, 46.
Symbolism, 56.

"Tableaux parisiens", 220.
Taine, 117.
"Tales" of Poe, 107.
Tannhäuser, 67, 196–197, 209.
"The Bells", 107, 132.
"The Black Cat", 107.
The Illustrated London News, 227.
"The Raven", 107.
Théâtre italien, 194.
Théâtre du Panthéon, 48.
Tiepolo, 49.
Tococopuli, 73.
Toubin, 86, 92.
Tour d'argent, 44.
"Toute entière", 149.

"Un fantome", quoted 176.
"Un voyage à Cythère", 108, 122*n*., 134, quoted 135.
"Une charogne", 45*n*.
"Une martyre", 50.
"Une mort héroïque", 216, 228.
Utilitarians, 36.

Valéry, Mr. Paul, Preface.
Vautrin, 85.
Véfour, 42.
Venus of Milo, 47, 59.
Verlaine, Paul, Preface, 251.
Vernet, Horace, 83.
Veronese, 78.
Versailles, 232.
Veuillot, Louis, 255.
Vigny, Alfred de, 128, 192–193.
Villemain, 191.
Voltaire, 11.
"Volupté", 22, 24, 54.

Wagner, Richard, Preface, 56, 67, 153, 181, 188, 193, 194–195, 196–197, 198, 200, 209, 248, 254.
Watteau, 134.
Weber, 81, 194.
Whistler, 22, 85.
Wilde, 36, 76, 164*n*.
"William Wilson", 105, 220.
Winckelmann, 47, 68.